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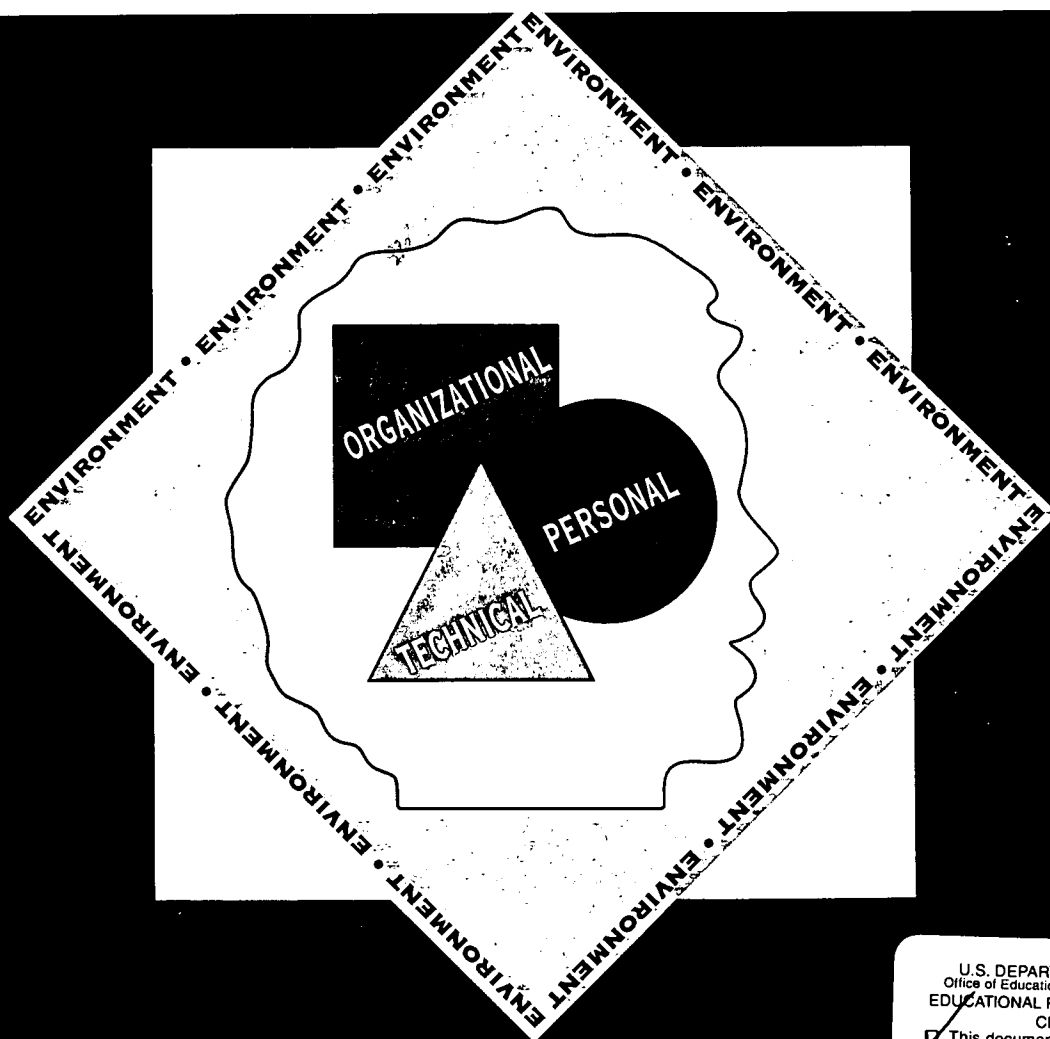
## ABSTRACT

The major challenges for educational reform today are assembling disparate pieces of information to create sustainable systemic change and "scaling up" systemic reform to encompass all schools, all programmatic areas, all levels of schooling and diverse social contexts. Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL) has begun to organize its work on systemic reform into three primary subsystems of educational systems--personal (the people domain), technical (policies and management structures), and organizational (curriculum learning and instructional strategies). This document contains articles that address areas within each of these domains. The articles in the first section focus on three important areas within the personal domain: (1) "Understanding the Keys to Motivation To Learn" (Barbara L. McCombs); (2) "Classroom Interactions and Achievement" (Loyce Caruthers); and (3) "Increasing Parental Involvement: A Key to Student Achievement" (Dan Jesse). The next three articles examine areas in the technical domain; (4) "The Metamorphosis of Classroom Management" (Fran Mayeski); (5) "Expanding the Definition of Technological Literacy in Schools" (James Fanning); and "Designing a Sustainable Standards-Base Assessment System" (Don Burger). The final two articles examine issues in the organizational domain: (7) "Developing Organizational Learning in Schools" (Susan Toft Everson); and (8) "A Framework for Managing Systemic Reform" (J. Timothy Waters and Franklin D. Cordell). (LMI)

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WHAT'S **NOTEWORTHY** ON

# Learners Learning Schooling



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Mid-continent Regional  
Educational Laboratory

2550 S. Parker Road  
Suite 500  
Aurora, CO 80014  
(303) 337-0990  
FAX (303) 337-3005

3100 Broadway  
Suite 209  
Kansas City, MO 64111  
(816) 756-2401  
FAX (816) 753-4565

Electronic access:  
info@mcrel.org  
<http://www.mcrel.org/>  
gopher<mcrel.org

*Dear Colleagues:*

*As the end of the millennium approaches, there is a need to reassess the fundamental assumptions and principles that have guided the initial development and continual evolution of the nation's education system. In creating a new vision of schools, some tough questions must be asked and answered. What do schools do now? What do we want them to do in the future? How do we prepare children to live in an ever-changing world? These are not simple questions; there are no simple answers. To find solutions for the diverse needs in this country and in our schools will take an intensive collaborative effort by all of us.*

*The need for new educational designs and strategies arises not from the wholesale failure of the nation's systems; rather it arises from the inability of current systems to meet the needs of all students, and from the reality that reform approaches implemented to date have not resulted in sustainable change and higher levels of learning and achievement. Educational issues and trends in McREL's Central Region generally mirror those at the national level. At the same time, the region's unique characteristics influence the process of education and have important implications for how McREL approaches its continuing role in fostering systemic reform to promote the dual goals of educational excellence and equity for all students, and development of sustained local capacity for continuous improvement.*

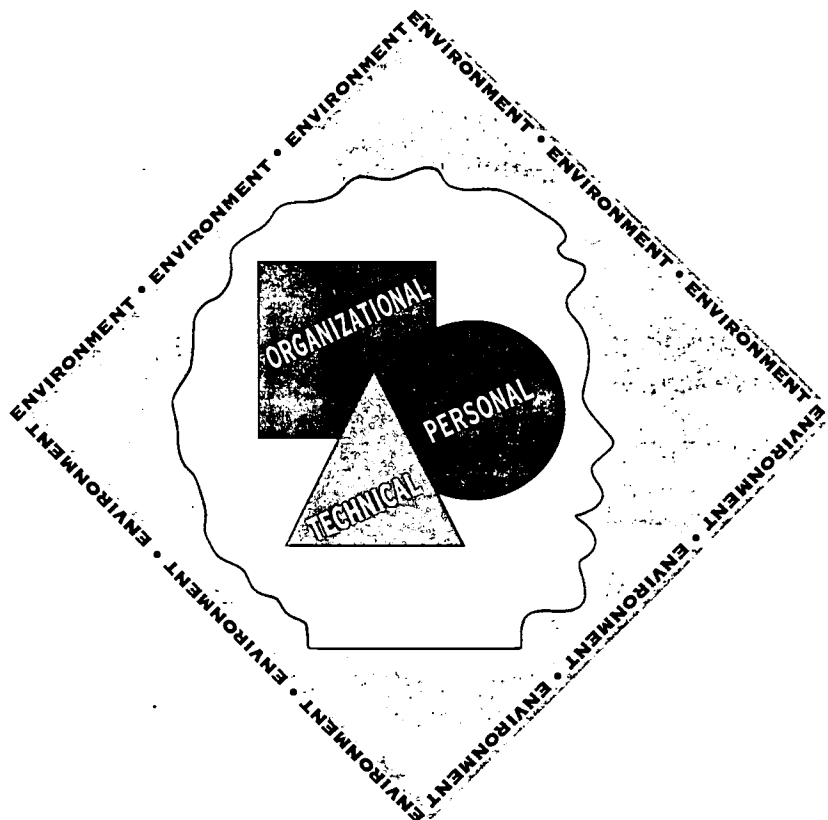
*We at McREL look forward to many more years of collaborating with educators, education policy makers and others in our region, as well as educational research and development colleagues throughout the nation and the world. Together, we will continue to work toward improving the quality of educational policy and practice through application of the best available knowledge from research, development and experience. As always, we share this Noteworthy with the hope that each of you will find within it research-based information and ideas for improvement that will interest, stimulate and inform you and will aid you in contributing in even more substantive and meaningful ways to success for all our students.*

*Sincerely,*

J. Timothy (Tim) Waters  
Executive Director

WHAT'S **NOTEWORTHY** ON

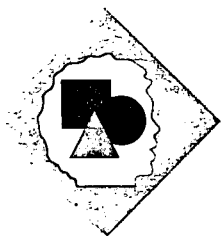
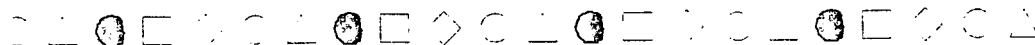
# Learners Learning Schooling



**MREL**

*Winter 1995*

# CONTENTS



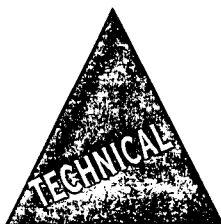
INTRODUCTION .....Page 3

UNDERSTANDING THE KEYS TO MOTIVATION TO LEARN .....Page 5  
by *Barbara L. McCombs*



CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT .....Page 13  
by *Loyce Caruthers*

INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: .....Page 19  
A KEY TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT  
by *Dan Jesse*



THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT .....Page 27  
by *Fran Mayeski*

EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF TECHNOLOGICAL .....Page 33  
LITERACY IN SCHOOLS  
by *James Fanning*

DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE STANDARDS-BASED .....Page 38  
ASSESSMENT SYSTEM  
by *Don Burger*



DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN SCHOOLS .....Page 53  
by *Susan Toft Everson*

A FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING SYSTEMIC REFORM .....Page 57  
by *J. Timothy Waters and Franklin D. Cordell*

**McREL**

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Regional Educational  
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
*J. Timothy Waters*

PRODUCTION/DESIGN EDITOR  
*Diane McIntyre Wilber*

DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
*Louis F. Cicchinelli*

MANAGING EDITOR  
*Sandra Carroll Berger*

GRAPHIC ARTIST  
*Beth Skelley*



# INTRODUCTION

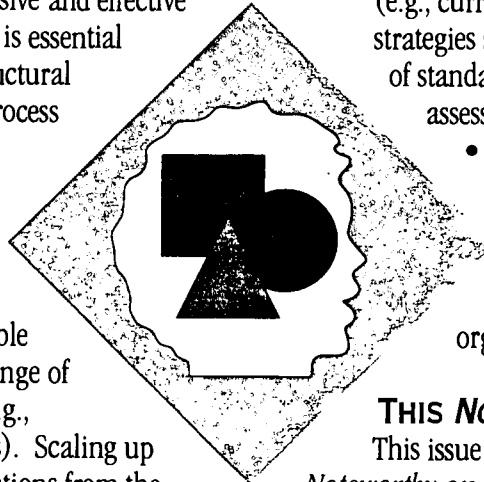
The major challenges for educational reform today are “putting the pieces together” to create sustainable systemic change and “scaling up” systemic reform to encompass all schools, all programmatic areas, all levels of schooling and diverse social contexts. McREL is focusing its current development and applied research work on creating and disseminating new tools and strategies to help local and state educators meet these challenges.

Certainly much has been done; certainly there is much more to do. In order to design comprehensive and effective strategies that facilitate systemic reform, it is essential to consider two components: the basic structural domains of educational systems and the process of systemic change itself. A conceptual framework is needed to examine and address thoroughly all aspects of educational systems. Alignment and integration of subsystems are necessary for sustainable systemic change; and sustainable systemic change must involve a broader range of stakeholders in all educational contexts (e.g., classrooms, schools, districts, communities). Scaling up must extend the reach of successful innovations from the local and regional levels to the national level so that all students will benefit.

## A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

McREL has begun to organize its work on systemic reform into three primary domains or subsystems of educational systems: Personal, Technical and Organizational. The fragmentation of so many well-intentioned reform efforts strongly demonstrates the need for development and applied research to inform improvement that is truly systemic. In order to be systemic and sustainable, educational reform that facilitates learning and achievement of all students must simultaneously address:

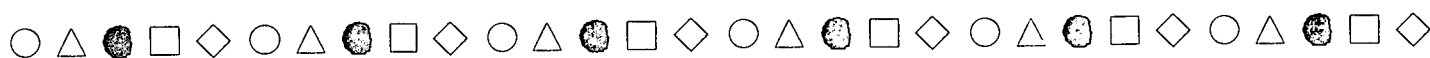
- the **personal** or “people” domain of the educational system (e.g., student, teacher, administrator, parent and community member attitudes; beliefs and assumptions about learning; readiness for change; understanding of the change process; interactions among all the people involved in the system; and the comprehensive dynamics and psychology of change; etc.);
- the **technical** domain of the educational system (e.g., curriculum, learning and instructional strategies such as development and implementation of standards, standards-based performance assessment, educational technology, etc.); and
- the **organizational** domain of the educational system (e.g., policies, management structures, community support for the school system, procedures to implement innovations, political issues, organizational reputation and history, etc.).



### THIS NOTEWORTHY

This issue of McREL's *Noteworthy* series, *What's Noteworthy on Learners, Learning & Schooling*, contains articles that address areas within each of these domains. The domains are represented in the graphic design by three geometric figures. The circle is used as a symbol for the personal domain, the triangle for the technical domain, and the square for the organizational domain. These symbols are superimposed on a silhouette representing the head of a child to communicate McREL's conviction that all educational reform efforts must focus on the learner. Everything that is done within any of the domains of the educational system impacts learners and learning. And all those involved in schooling—teachers, administrators, parents, and other adults as well as children—are learners. The overarching goal of all reform and improvement undertakings is excellent and equitable schooling that results in high quality learning for all students. All reform efforts are placed in the larger environment or community.





The articles in the first section focus on three important areas within the personal domain. First, Barbara McCombs writes about recent research findings about motivation to learn and shares information and ideas on practices that can foster motivation to learn in school. Loyce Caruthers reviews the research on the kinds of factors that influence teachers' often unconscious attitudes toward and behaviors involving diverse students and how these affect students' learning, and she suggests action steps for improving the quality of teacher and student interactions. Dan Jesse reviews the changing definitions of parental involvement and the various forms it may take, synthesizes current research findings about how to increase the quality as well as the amount of parental involvement in schools, and provides a checklist schools may use as a tool in such efforts.

The next three articles address areas that fit primarily within the technical domain of schooling. Fran Mayeski explains how classroom management strategies have shifted in recent years as teachers have become more learner centered and includes concrete examples of current research-based approaches to creating safe and orderly learning environments. Jim Fanning challenges educators with a thought-provoking examination of the complex factors that must be addressed in any serious attempt to integrate technology fully into schools. Don Burger provides a detailed framework and concrete examples to aid any school district that seriously undertakes design, development and implementation of a standards-based assessment system—as a subsystem of a standards-based school system.

Finally, the organizational domain section includes an article by Susan Toft Everson that reviews major research findings about how organizations change and develop and provides suggestions for translating such knowledge into

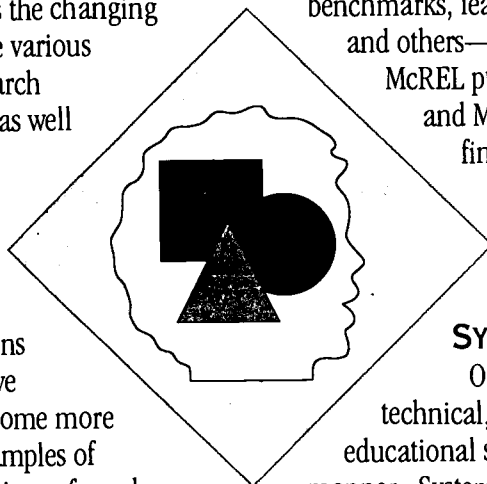
practice in order to produce organizational learning. In the last article, Tim Waters and Frank Cordell lay out a framework of project management concepts and strategies that they found to be essential tools for bringing about systemic change in a school district.

Clearly, these articles include only a sampling of the research- and experience-based knowledge gained over the past several years related to the three domains of educational systems. Many other areas—content standards and benchmarks, learner-centered psychological principles, and others—have been addressed in other recent McREL publications. Much more has been learned; and McREL will continue to communicate new findings, not only from its own applied research and development efforts but also from the work of others.

### INTEGRATING DOMAINS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

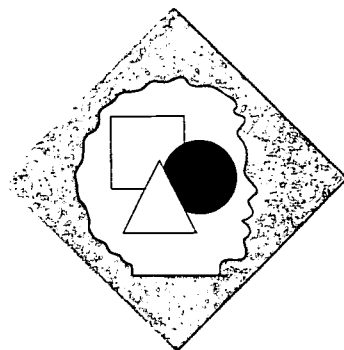
Only in recent years have changes in the technical, personal, and organizational domains of educational systems begun to emerge in a systemic manner. Systems integration, identified in the literature as critical to successful systemic change, is one area McREL is studying. It is a “missing link” in the educational reform movement. Our conceptual framework places particular emphasis on development and applied research that extend the look at system domains and their interactions to determine how they can be managed and integrated effectively.

McREL continues to expand the current knowledge base and to integrate the domains in order to foster the systemic changes that are so necessary to achieve high quality, effective, equitable, and accessible schooling. Adding to the knowledge of educators who work in schools can make learning more successful for our children.



# UNDERSTANDING THE KEYS TO MOTIVATION TO LEARN

*by Barbara L. McCombs*



Trying to reach students who seem to have lost interest in learning and are displaying no motivation to learn in school, or who are defeated or turned off to school for any number of reasons, is a frustrating and all too common experience for teachers in today's classrooms and schools.

**Why is student motivation to learn a problem in too many of our traditional educational systems? In contrast, what is present in those schools where motivation to learn is not a problem?**

These questions have intrigued educators and motivation researchers for years, myself included. As both a parent and an educational psychologist, I have watched my two children start out with a boundless love of learning, natural curiosity and motivation to learn and explore their worlds, and an initial excitement about school. I have also watched this excitement and motivation become seriously eroded by the time they reached middle school. What happened to their natural motivation to learn and the motivation of a growing number of our nation's school children?

Exploring these questions, I have discovered some fundamental principles or keys to motivation to learn and to the identification of the instructional policies and practices that can re-inspire students to love school and help them recapture their natural motivation to learn. This article highlights my discoveries and their substantiation in current research. It provides specific guidelines for changes in practice that can help teachers and administrators positively address student problems with motivation to learn—whether they are in traditional teacher or curriculum-centered schools or in the growing number of learner-centered schools. Let's look first at what we know about motivation to learn; then at the conditions of schooling that can foster rather than actually work to destroy this motivation; and, finally, at what can be done to ameliorate or eliminate the negative conditions.

## UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION TO LEARN

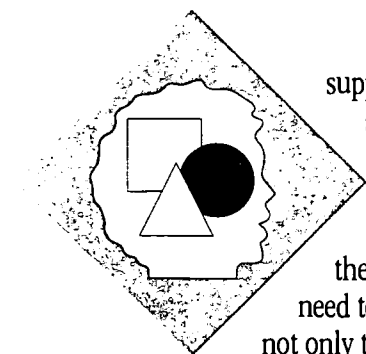
The frustrations that many teachers feel in trying to motivate hard-to-reach students come from the realities of

time pressure, the large number of students with learning and emotional needs, heavy accountability demands from administrators and parents, and other stress-producing situations that exist in many of our schools. It is helpful for teachers to know what those studying motivation are discovering about the nature of motivation to learn and the ways it can be developed and enhanced in students. This understanding helps teachers realize that almost everything they do in the classroom has a motivational influence on students—either positive or negative. This includes the way information is presented, the kinds of activities teachers use, the ways teachers interact with students, the amount of choice and control given to students, and the opportunities for students to work alone or in groups. Students react to who teachers are, what they do, and how comfortable they feel in the classroom. In short, this is because motivation is a function of what motivation researchers Deci and Ryan (1991) describe as natural needs for control, competence, and belonging that exist in all of us.

**Knowing how to meet individual learner needs for control, competence, and belonging in the classroom is one key to student motivation to learn.**

But let's look more deeply at what we know about motivation and, in particular, motivation to learn. When examining the concept of motivation, I have argued that learners of all ages are naturally quite adept at being self-motivated and at directing and managing their own learning on tasks that they perceive as interesting, fun, personally meaningful, or relevant in some way (e.g., McCombs, 1991, 1993, 1994). Typically, that means activities that are engaging or related to implicit or explicit personal goals such as feeling competent, in control, and/or connected to others. In short, the issue of needing to help students want to learn and self-regulate their learning comes up in those situations in which students (a) are asked to learn something that does not particularly interest them; (b) have little or no control or choice; (c) believe they lack the personal skills or resources needed to be successful; or (d) lack adequate external





supports and resources, including adult help, respect, and encouragement. Since, for too many students, these conditions describe much of their schooling experiences, we need to understand how to develop not only the student skills involved in self-regulation, but also the motivation or will to self-regulate their own learning. To enhance motivation to learn, all the preceding personal and contextual variables involved in schooling must be addressed.

**Another key to motivation to learn, then, is being aware—for each learner—of the degree to which learning tasks stimulate and/or are related to student interests, the level of student control and choice that is encouraged, the necessary skill development that is fostered, and the resource and social support that is provided.**

To understand how different schooling experiences can influence motivation to learn, it is important to distinguish its qualities in situations or on learning tasks that individuals perceive as interesting, fun, personally meaningful, or relevant versus tasks that are perceived to be boring, tedious, meaningless, or irrelevant from the individual's perspective. In the first case, motivation to learn is stimulated naturally because the learning tasks are perceived as exciting or personally meaningful. In the second case, motivation to learn must be stimulated from the outside to overcome the lack of intrinsic motivation that is caused by the student perceiving the learning tasks to be boring or not personally meaningful. An important distinction is whether choice is present and the degree of choice allowed. In many learning situations that are externally imposed, choices are limited to control and management of internal thoughts and feelings; behavioral choices are few. Another important distinction, therefore, is whether motivation is a natural response to the learner's curiosity or whether the learner must exert effort to manage feelings arising from negative thinking about external conditions (e.g., teacher, curriculum, instructional practices).

**Motivation to learn needs to be understood as arising from both external supports and internal processes.**

In my own work on motivation to learn, the self-determining aspects lie at the center of understanding why some students want to self-regulate their own learning and

others do not. To understand why self-determination is so important to an understanding of motivation to learn, my colleagues and I (McCombs & Marzano, 1990, in press; McCombs & Whisler, 1989) have integrated work by Deci and Ryan (1991); Mills (1991); Mills, Pransky, & Sedgeman (1994); and Paris, Newman, & Jacobs (1985). From this integration, motivation to learn is seen as a function of both (a) a personal assessment of the meaningfulness of particular learning experiences or activities and (b) the process of self-initiating, determining or choosing, and controlling learning goals, processes, and outcomes.

**For individuals to generate motivation to learn in learning situations, it is necessary for them to see that they have the natural capacity to be motivated to learn under the right internal and external conditions.**

Internal conditions that can enhance motivation to learn in situations where what is to be learned is largely imposed from the outside include (a) an understanding of the self-as-agent in orchestrating thinking, feelings, motivation, and self-regulated behaviors; (b) operating from an understanding of natural capacities to control and direct one's own learning; and (c) perceptions that the learning task or experience is personally interesting, meaningful, and relevant. External conditions that support these internal conditions include provisions for relevancy, choice, control, challenge, responsibility, competence, personal connection, fun, and support from others in the form of caring, respect, and guidance in skill development.

**Motivation to learn can be defined as a natural response to learning opportunities that is enhanced by: (1) a recognition of the role of thinking and conditioned thoughts in learning and motivation to learn under a variety of conditions, including self-constructed evaluations of the meaning and relevance of a particular learning opportunity; (2) an understanding of one's natural agency and capacities for self-regulation; and (3) contextual conditions that support natural learning as well as perceptions of meaningfulness and self-determination.**

## **WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS THAT FOSTER MOTIVATION TO LEARN?**

To understand the conditions that foster motivation to learn in school, we must first consider what students are

saying about their school experiences. From there, we can look at what we have learned about practices that can enhance motivation to learn, even in more traditional, non-learner-centered schools.

## THE LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE OF LEARNING AND SCHOOLING

When learners perceive learning to be interesting, fun, personally meaningful, and relevant and the context supports and encourages personal control, motivation to learn and self-regulation of the learning process occur naturally (McCombs & Whisler, 1989; Ridley, 1991). That is, in situations the learner perceives as interesting or related to personal goals that can be pursued in self-determining ways, the learner is caught up in the activity and directs attention to accomplishing the personal goal. The learner may not even be consciously aware of being self-motivated and self-regulatory. In many ways, the learner is in a state of "flow" or immersion in the enjoyment of the activity (cf., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In this state, the process of learning is intrinsically motivating, and motivation to learn is enhanced. Learners then want to regulate their learning and make the decisions necessary to reach personal learning goals or pursue personal interests.

From the learner's perspective, then, motivation to learn and self-regulation are natural. The problem is that students many times do not understand the role of their thinking in learning and do not see current educational content and practices as intrinsically interesting and engaging or relevant to their desired goals and personal interests. They also do not see the context as one that supports basic personal and social needs, such as to be self-determining, competent, and connected to others (cf., Deci & Ryan, 1991).

**Another key to motivation to learn is helping students see ways they can change negative thinking and make learning fun by relating it to personal interests, working with others in meeting learning goals, and being able to make choices—have a voice—in their own learning process.**

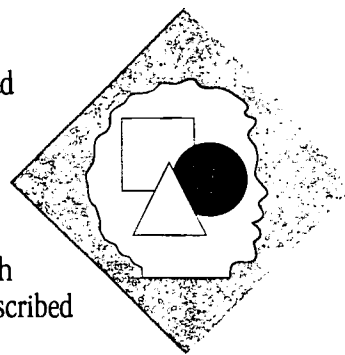
As borne out in work by Damico and Roth (1994), students who want to learn and stay in school, compared to students who drop out, characterize their schools as having a facilitative orientation toward students, with adults who treat them in positive ways, communicate high expectations, and also communicate joint responsibility for learning by staff and students. Students in schools with high graduation rates, as contrasted with students in schools with low graduation

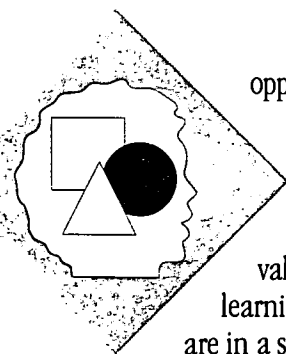
rates, also report that they had strong support systems, fair and consistent discipline policies, and a strong and active role and voice in school practices. Schools with low graduation rates were described by students as punitive and authoritarian, unfair and inconsistent, and with faculty who were demoralized and unsure about what type of learning environment they should be creating. Students were very clear and articulate about what needed to change. Damico and Roth concluded that, for schools to change in positive ways that will make a difference in whether students want to be in school and graduate, students need to be included in regular assessments of the impact of specific school policies and practices on creating a positive learning environment. Beyond this, students need to be involved on the front end in defining these policies and practices.

This fits with research by Zimmerman (in press) that shows that intrinsic motivation and self-regulation are, by definition, possible only in contexts that provide for choice and control. If students do not have options to choose among or if they are not allowed to control critical dimensions of their learning (such as what topics to pursue, how and when to study, and the outcomes they want to achieve), regulation of thinking and learning processes by the self is not fully possible. Externally imposed conditions then regulate the content, structure, and process of learning. Zimmerman goes on to argue that if students are not allowed choice and control, they are not likely to learn strategies for regulating their own learning and, as a result, do not attach value to self-regulation strategy training or willingly self-initiate and control the use of various strategies. Training in such self-regulation strategies as monitoring one's comprehension while learning, setting learning and performance goals, and controlling negative emotions and cognitions has been shown to enhance school learning and performance (Zimmerman, in press). But if the major conditions required for self-regulation (choice and control) are not present, schools will actually work against helping learners want to learn and self-regulate their learning.

## CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS AND SCHOOLING

For a variety of reasons, our educational system operates to determine much of what students learn, when they learn it, how they learn it, and how long it takes them. The critical dimensions of self-regulation are then absent; and students'





opportunities to develop self-regulated learning strategies are unequally distributed among those learners who come from families who value personal responsibility, learning and education and who are in a socioeconomic position to

provide their children with opportunities to learn personal responsibility and self-regulation skills outside of school. When these more advantaged students are in school, they are characterized as being goal-directed, being able to manage their time and effort while learning, and having a strong sense of self-efficacy about their abilities to reach learning goals (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1992). They are usually the ones we see doing well in school as contrasted with children who see themselves as less likely to succeed, are more impulsive, have lower academic goals, are more anxious, and are more influenced by extrinsic factors than their more advantaged peers (Caplan et al., 1992).

**Educational conditions that allow for the development of self-regulation strategies are the very ones that can address students' will to learn. They are those conditions that honor students' needs for choice and control.**

Educators involved in rethinking the conditions that will not only help students learn desired outcomes but also engage students in wanting to learn these outcomes have recognized the importance of putting students in control of their own thinking and actions (e.g., AAAS, 1989; Farges, 1993; Wiggins, 1992). As stated by Farges (1993), the director of the San Francisco Project 2061 *Science for All Americans* (a K-12 curriculum model), "It is essential that students feel they have 'ownership' in decisions if they are to support them with any enthusiasm" (p. 22).

The *Science for All Americans* curriculum model is integrated from the student's perspective in that unique knowledge and skills the student brings from various disciplines are applied to a "challenge" task that is meaningful to him or her. The challenge task engages students in challenging their beliefs, actions, and imagination by having them investigate and respond to issues relating to survival and quality of life, solve problems, and/or create products. The curriculum is designed to create learning experiences that involve both critical and creative thinking skills by requiring students to define the task, set goals, establish criteria, research and gather information,

activate prior knowledge, generate additional ideas and questions, organize, analyze, and integrate all this information (Farges, 1993). Students also are expected to self-evaluate the outcomes of the learning experience in terms of both the process and the product and, in short, to be self-regulated learners who control their own thinking and actions. The approach is learner centered in that it addresses the personal, social, academic, and physical needs of all students as well as maximizes their opportunities for choice. In so doing, it is in keeping with the research on motivation, learning, and self-regulation. An integration of this research helps us understand basic principles related to will to learn.

Beyond this knowledge base, however, is other work in psychology and philosophy that suggests that it is necessary for teachers to see learners as naturally motivated to learn and learning as a psychological event that flourishes in fun, exciting, personally meaningful, and supportive environments (McCombs & Marzano, in press). *This understanding by teachers is key to promoting a depth and joy of learning for a lifetime.* For teachers to create these environments, changes in thinking and practice are necessary.

#### IMPACTS OF TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

A number of researchers have emphasized the importance of teacher beliefs in determining not only classroom practices but also the orientation or perspective one has about learners, learning, and motivation. Research by Deci and Ryan (1985) has shown that if teachers have an autonomy orientation rather than a control orientation, their students will demonstrate greater intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. Thus, an autonomy orientation supports perceptions of self-determination and promotes willingness to learn. Furthermore, as students are given more responsibility for their own learning, Meece (1991) points out, both students and teachers come to believe that learning is supported by student self-regulation. Teachers then are more likely to let students make significant learning choices such as designing class projects, choosing learning partners, or setting classroom rules. Making these choices further supports self-regulated learning; and teachers' roles change from maintaining control to providing appropriate instructional supports or "scaffolding," modeling thinking and learning strategies, and being co-learners in an apprenticeship model of learning.

One set of beliefs about teaching and learning that supports an autonomy orientation is constructivism. This theory of learning holds that learning is a unique process of



constructing meaning from information and experiences, that learners are responsible for their own learning, that teachers need to guide the process of learning by helping students raise questions about their understanding, and that all students can learn (Comeaux, 1993). What teachers believe about learners, learning, and teaching, however, can predict practice only to the degree that the context and policies of their school support these beliefs rather than interfering with them. For teachers to change their beliefs and practices, they also must be supported in their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to others (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan & Powelson, 1991) and have opportunities to learn about alternative techniques for fostering learning for all learners. Furthermore, school policies and practices must be supportive of new understandings about motivation in learning (Maehr & Midgley, 1991; McCombs & Marzano, 1990).

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND SUPPORTIVE STRUCTURES IN ENHANCING MOTIVATION TO LEARN?

Building on what is known about relationships between motivation to learn and opportunities to satisfy basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness—with a particular emphasis on the importance of autonomy—supports in developing self-determined motivation—it is clear that students need to be supported by opportunities for choice, to participate in making decisions about their educational process and activities. They also need to be encouraged to take responsibility for regulating their own learning and for being self-determined and autonomous learners. According to Zimmerman (in press), the psychological dimensions of self-regulation that are possible in school environments are in the goals and motives for learning (the “why” dimension), the method of academic learning (the “how” dimension), the performance outcomes to achieve (the “what” dimension), and the physical and social environment in which they learn (the “where” dimension). When choices are given in all these dimensions, the evidence is clear that student motivation, learning, and performance are enhanced. In addition, when students are allowed to be self-regulatory in these critical dimensions, they are more intrinsically or self-motivated, more active in planning and monitoring their learning, more aware of how well they are doing, more resourceful and efficient in their use of resources, and more sensitive to the social and environmental contexts in which they are learning. The contextual supports needed also relate to the interpersonal

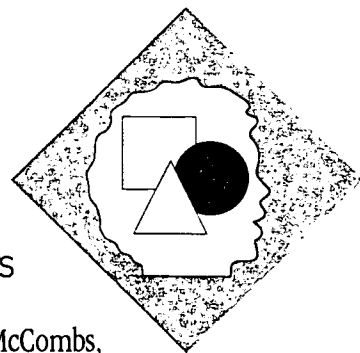
and classroom climate set by teachers.

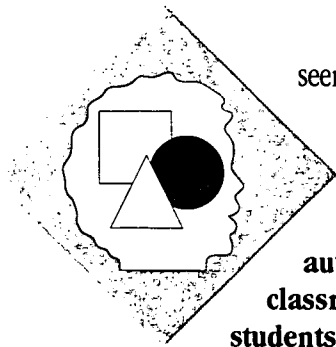
### THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN LEARNER NEEDS, SKILLS, AND CONTEXTUAL SUPPORTS

In our own work with motivational contexts (e.g., McCombs, 1996; McCombs & Whisler, 1989), we have defined the enabling interpersonal context for the empowerment of will and development of skill as one that provides social support. In our reciprocal empowerment framework, social support meets needs for (a) relatedness, by creating a climate or culture of trust, respect, caring, concern, and a sense of community with others; (b) autonomy, by providing opportunities for individual choice, expression of self-determination and agency, and freedom to fail or take risks; and (c) competence, by providing feedback, challenge to elicit creative and critical thinking, and opportunities to grow and to see growth in one’s capacities and skills (cf., Deci & Ryan, 1991). Our framework also addresses the will and skill components of motivation (cf., Paris et al., 1985).

We have recommended that **interventions aimed at creating climates of positive social and emotional support for students and teachers are those that create opportunities for teachers and students to role model effective behaviors, and to participate in role plays that simulate listening and inter-personal activities.** As teachers experience the self-determining, self-constructive nature of learning and a positive climate of support and quality relationships, they can internalize new roles and metaphors of teaching that are consistent with the current knowledge base on learning and learners’ needs. As teachers modify their beliefs and practices, they are better able to support the development of self-determining and self-regulatory processes and behaviors in their students. They are also better able to focus not only on the self-regulatory aspects of learning, but also on the motivational needs and characteristics of the learner.

Research reported by Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan (1991) indicates that when teachers are noncontrolling and nonpressuring, students are more likely to regulate their own learning; and they have higher intrinsic motivation, feelings of competence, and self-esteem than with controlling and pressuring teachers. In addition, Stiller (in preparation) points out that those educational contexts that promote self-determination are based on different assumptions than those contexts that are controlling. In the former, motivation is





seen as originating from the students themselves, whereas in the latter, motivation is seen as originating from others. Stiller defines

**autonomy supportive classrooms as those in which students experience a valuing of**

**their perspectives, have opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings, and are encouraged to make choices and take self-initiative in learning activities.** On the other hand, controlling classrooms are those in which students experience pressure to think, feel, or behave in a specified way defined by others rather than themselves. Externally imposed classroom regulatory structures such as rules or goals can be experienced as self-determined, however, to the degree that students accept them, value them, and personally endorse them. In such cases, the externally imposed structures have been accepted and students experience personal responsibility and choice rather than coercion and pressure (Stiller, in preparation).

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

In general, effective interventions for promoting will to learn, motivation, and self-regulated learning focus on an understanding of basic learner needs, interests, and learning capacities as well as an understanding of the personally and socially constructive nature of the learning process. Psychological research from such areas as human development, learning, cognition, and motivation are being integrated in ways that can contribute directly to practices that are responsive to the individual learner. Ornstein (1993) argues that key in those practices that foster motivation and engagement in learning are good teaching and teachers that emphasize the personal and social development of learners. He cites a variety of research indicating that people perform best when they feel respected and valued, when they can develop their own unique strengths, and when they are helped to take control of their learning and their lives. Furthermore, Oldfather (1991) contends that students' continuing impulse to learn is propelled and focused by conditions that are learner-centered as defined from the perspectives of students. Her research indicates that higher levels of intrinsic motivation are evoked in contexts that honor students' self-expression—when their voices are heard, taken seriously, and acted upon.

In addition to the benefits of enhanced motivation to learn, research shows a number of other benefits of

interventions that focus on providing more learner choice and control. These include greater displays of active planning and monitoring of learning, higher levels of student awareness of their own learning progress and outcomes, more resourcefulness and efficiency in using learning resources, and higher levels of sensitivity to the social learning context (Zimmerman, in press). Benefits also include broader educational outcomes such as staying in school, higher academic performance, self-regulation of learning such as doing schoolwork, feelings of competence and self-esteem, enjoyment of academic work, and satisfaction with school (Deci et al., 1991).

From our work with learner-centered models of education (McCombs, 1996; McCombs, Swartz, Wlodkowski, Stiller, & Whisler, in press) that build on the *Learner-Centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform*, published by the APA Task Force on Psychology in Education (1993), it is clear that redesigning school and classroom practices and structures in keeping with what we know about learners and learning can lead also to outcomes that extend to enhanced student valuing of schooling and learning, as well as a reduction in students' feelings of alienation, boredom, and frustration. In turn, when practices provide for critical dimensions of choice, relevancy, control, responsibility, and connection with others, outcomes such as reduced dropout and associated problems such as drug use, gang involvement, and other negative behavioral outcomes are possible.

#### CONCLUSIONS

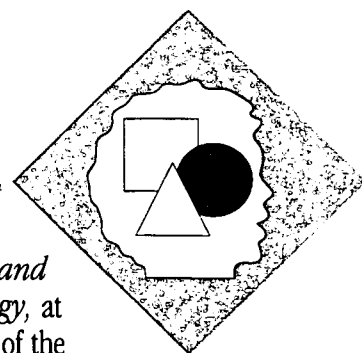
From my read of the research, the support is overwhelmingly on the side of learner-centered practices that honor individual learner perspectives and needs for competence, control, and belonging. The voices of the students themselves provide even more support for this perspective. Listening to the voices of students is increasingly being advocated by researchers concerned with enhancing student motivation (e.g., Oldfather, 1992; Poplin & Weeres, 1993). When students are asked what is right about schools, they most frequently mention high quality human relationships in which people care, listen, are honest and open, understand, and respect others. When students are asked what makes school a place where they want to learn, they report that they want (a) rigor and joy in their schoolwork, (b) a balance of complexity and clarity, (c) opportunities to discuss personal meanings and values, (d) learning activities that are relevant and fun, and (e) learning experiences that offer choice and require action (Poplin & Weeres, 1993).

This integrative approach to understanding motivation to learn from the perspectives of current thinking in psychology and education leads to the conclusion that we need to rethink our models of learners and learning. It means a relatively dramatic transformation in what we think, as well as what we know about ourselves from experience with our capacities for accessing natural learning and motivation to learn. Most importantly, however, it involves a willingness to entertain alternative perspectives of motivation and what schools and classrooms, teachers and teaching processes need to look like for students to love to learn in school and in life. It means inspiring a thirst for knowledge that leads to competent performance as a natural outcome of learning and schooling.

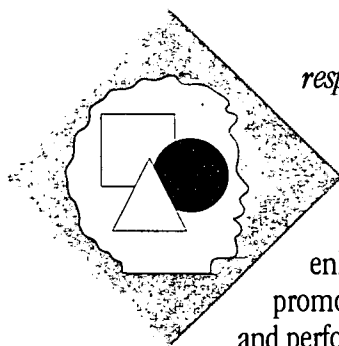
This moves us to go beyond the perspective of *motivating* students to *fostering and enhancing* access to natural learning and motivation to learn capacities that exist in all of us. We will need to consider strategies for sharing knowledge, expertise, power, and control among learners at all levels of the system—students as well as teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Building true learning communities will be key. All of this will not be easy and will most certainly be controversial within the field and in practice. But I believe this direction will be worth it, for it will move us toward the goal of *all* students learning at their highest potential inside and outside of school—and loving it.

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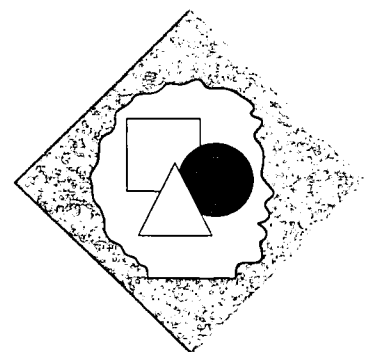
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# CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENT

by Loyce Caruthers



Adults often reminisce about lost opportunities to learn or remarks heard as students that have impacted their personal and professional lives. A female student experiences a missed opportunity to choose a math career or a minority student comes to believe that certain careers are better suited for specific groups in our society. A careless remark, a misphrased question, or a facial expression unchallenged can result in negative expectations about self and learning. Studies have found that students' perceptions of the classroom environment can have a direct impact not only on their achievement but also on their personal-social behaviors (Vasquez, 1988). Furthermore, depressed rates of student classroom participation predict lowered achievement as early as the first three grades (Finn & Cox cited in Cohen & Lotan, 1995). In the words of

Scott-Jones and Clark (1986), "Academic achievement is dependent on more than individual abilities and aspirations. The social environment in which learning takes place can enhance or diminish the behaviors that lead to achievement" (p. 523).

*A single teaching episode or an isolated interaction between the teacher and a student or between a student and his or her peers can influence the student's perceptions of the learning environment and his or her motivation to achieve.*

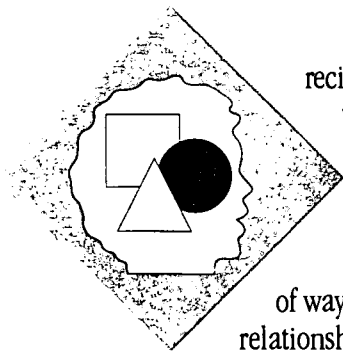
These examples clearly illustrate the complexities of teacher and student interactions in classrooms. A single teaching episode or an isolated interaction between the teacher and a student or between a student and his or her peers can influence the student's perceptions of the learning environment and his or her motivation to achieve. What a student comes to expect from the teacher and peers is a consequence of behavior based on the interactions between the student and teacher, as well as between the student and

his or her peers. That consequence may affect future behavior or life options.

The power of expectations in the lives of children begins long before they come to school. Through socialization in the home and community, children learn of expectations for their lives. What they come to believe about themselves is a result of the messages from significant others such as parents and other adults. During the past two decades we have learned that teachers do, indeed, form expectations for student performance and that teacher expectations influence student performance (Baron, Tom & Cooper, 1985; Dusek, 1985).

Moreover, in light of the issues of mainstreaming and desegregation, research on the effects of teacher expectations on classroom interactions was seen as the staff development topic of the 1980s. It was a time when we believed that improving the quality of interactions could lead to equitable outcomes for all students. We emphasized such programs as Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) for improving the quality of teacher and student interactions, especially for low achievement students.

As current reform issues place more emphasis on increasing the level of performance for all students through systemic change, we must continue to place emphasis on developing positive classroom relationships. The nature of teacher-student relationships strongly affects student performance, including the decision to drop out of school. A study of high school dropouts among Native American students concluded that dropouts perceived teachers as not caring about them and not providing them sufficient assistance in their work (Coladarci, 1983). Gay (1993) suggests that positive classroom relationships are becoming more difficult to establish as a growing cultural and social distance between students and teachers contributes to an alarming schism in the instructional process. Wexler (1992) warns that "the current movement of cognitive reform misses the point that the main thing about schools is that they are one of a very few remaining public interactional spaces in which people are still engaged with each other in the



reciprocal, though organizationally patterned, labor of producing meaning—indeed, the core meaning of self identity” (p. 10).

Offered here is a discussion of ways to increase positive relationships through understanding

the communication of teacher expectations embedded in classroom interactions, variables that influence expectations as a result of unexamined beliefs and behaviors, and action steps for improving the quality of teacher and student interactions for increased learning and achievement.

### THE COMMUNICATION OF EXPECTATIONS THROUGH CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

Expectations are assumptions or inferences that teachers (or parents and administrators) may make about the academic achievement or future behavior of their students. The powerful influence of expectations in our lives was demonstrated by Rosenthal and Jacobson (cited in Good & Brophy, 1987) who manipulated teacher expectations for student achievement to see if these expectations would be fulfilled. When teachers were told that randomly selected students had been identified as “intellectual late bloomers,” teacher behavior changed enough to have a significant positive effect on student performance, both in the classroom and on achievement tests. Results were explained in terms of the powerful effects of the self-fulfilling prophecy effects of teacher expectations.

The work of Rosenthal and Jacobson created controversy and interest in how teachers form expectations and how they are communicated to students. Despite the criticism of their work, it has been well documented that teacher expectations are communicated to students during teacher-student interactions (Dusek, 1985). Researchers (Good and Brophy, 1987) studied the ways teachers communicate their expectations to high achievers and low achievers. Their observations of classrooms revealed that teachers treat low achievers differently than they treat high achievers. The following behaviors indicate differences toward students perceived to be low achievers:

- providing general, often insincere praise;
- providing them with less feedback;
- demanding less effort;
- interrupting low achievers more often;

- seating them farther away from the teacher;
- paying less attention to them;
- calling on them less often;
- waiting less time for them to respond to questions;
- criticizing them more often for failure; and
- smiling at them less or giving them fewer other nonverbal indicators of support. (p. 10)

Cooper (cited in Winfield, 1986) believes that these behavioral differences indicate the existence of sustaining expectation effects that would make learning by low-expectation students relatively more difficult. Cohen (cited in Cohen & Lotan, 1995) supports this view, stating that “differences in classroom interactions can lead to differences in learning outcomes—that is, those who talk more, learn more” (p. 100).

Paine (1989) found that teacher education students, who are mostly white and monolingual, often view diversity as a problem rather than a resource. This attitude stems from negative attitudes about racial, ethnic and language groups other than their own which influence teacher satisfaction and engagement with teaching. Louis (1994) explains these feelings:

Compared with teachers of more affluent children, teachers who work with students from poorer families are more likely, for example, to believe that their students bring behaviors into the classroom that make teaching difficult, and to believe that they have little influence over their students’ learning. In addition, teachers in schools with a higher proportion of minority children are more likely to feel that their efforts in teaching are not rewarded with student engagement in learning. It is not surprising then that we find many teachers claiming that “if you only gave me students who were prepared to learn, I could be a great teacher.” (p. 2)

The expectations teachers have for students can be affected significantly by such variables as information about test performance, performance on assignments, track or group placement information obtained from other teachers, classroom conduct, physical appearance, race, socioeconomic status, gender, speech characteristics, and various diagnostic labels (Brophy, 1983). Some of these variables and how they affect teacher expectations are described in the next section.

## VARIABLES THAT INFLUENCE TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

Teachers in both elementary and secondary classrooms are engaged in numerous interactions with their students and, in most cases, do not have the time to capture the essence of their interactions with students. Since they are not encouraged to study their own behavior or engage in constructive and critical analyses of their teaching, years may pass before they have the chance to examine personal beliefs and assumptions undergirding behavior. Well-intended and unconscious behaviors that are damaging to students often remain unchallenged and result in negative assumptions that educators may make about the academic or future behavior of their students.

Some of the key variables that influence teacher expectations and brief discussions of how they result from unexamined beliefs and behaviors follow. They are intended neither to be all inclusive nor to represent the concerns of all groups in our society; instead, they are useful as a way to begin to think about the ways schools reflect the stereotypes and biases prevalent in the society. "School experience is a small slice of a bigger and richer story of what social class life is like in a stratified American society" (Wexler, 1992).

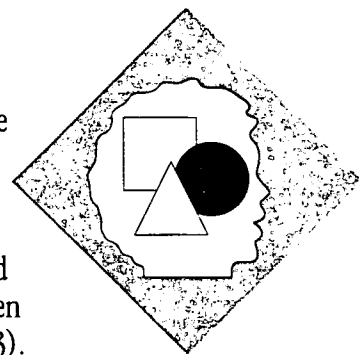
### ACHIEVEMENT

The expectations of teachers frequently are based on the initial achievement of students or knowledge of their past performance. There is evidence, however, that teachers tend to base their expectations on the group performance of students rather than on the performance of an individual child. Black students, in one study, tended to receive lower grades than white students for identical academic performance (Good, 1981). Teachers also attribute the achievement-oriented behaviors of white students to such internal factors as effort or motivation, while they attribute the achievement-oriented behaviors of black students to factors that students cannot control, such as parental encouragement or heredity (Scott-Jones & Clark, 1986).

### PLACEMENT

Placement of students in special education programs has been a contributor to the development of low expectations for students. Fair (1980) finds, "The placement of minority group students in special education programs further influences the expectations of teachers who may already have negative attitudes about the intellectual potential of minority group children" (p. 275). According to Oakes (1992), "Throughout the grades, race, social class, and track

assignments correlated consistently—with low-income students and non-Asian minorities disproportionately enrolled in low track academic classes and advantaged students and whites more often enrolled in high track" (p. 13).



### GENDER

Girls and minorities are short-changed in the critical currency of classroom interactions, according to the Sadkers and Steindam (1989). Teachers from grade school to graduate school ask males more questions, give them more precise feedback, criticize them more, and give them more time to respond. At the early primary level, Leinhardt, Seewald, and Engel (cited in Good & Findley, 1985) studied teacher-student interactions in second grade classrooms. They found that in reading girls had more academic contacts with teachers and received more instructional time than boys. In mathematics, boys received more academic contacts and more instructional time than girls.

### LANGUAGE

Language is a factor in making judgments or assumptions about the potential of students. Bikson (1974) found that even when the speech performance of black and Hispanic students was equal to or better than that of white students, teachers heard them as inferior. In other words, teachers may construe language or speech performance styles other than their own as deficiencies, which leads to negative perceptions of the intellectual ability of the child.

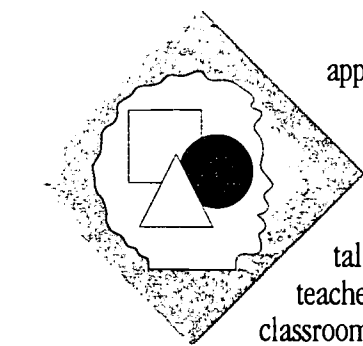
### CLASS

Winfield (1986) found that teachers, in general, expect more from middle-class students than from those from working- and lower-class backgrounds. They often perceive black students from working- or lower-class backgrounds as incapable of high-quality academic work. In a study of black elementary students, teachers had higher expectations for students who exhibited middle-class-like behaviors, e.g., verbal proficiency and classroom social skills, regardless of the teachers' perception of student social-class background (Gouldner cited in Winfield, 1986).

### TEMPERAMENTAL STYLES

In general, teachers tend to prefer and have more positive attitudes toward students who are adaptable, persistent, and





approaching and to reject students who are overly active and distractible (Carey & Keogh cited in Taylor, 1991). Differences in temperamental styles influence the nature of teacher-child interactions in the classroom, teacher evaluation of the performance of students, and decisions about student grades.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

It has been well established in the research that teacher expectations are influenced by the race and ethnicity of students. White students, according to Baron, Tom and Cooper (1985), elicited higher expectations for achievement than black students; and studies involving comparisons of Mexican-Americans with whites indicated higher expectations were held for whites. Moreover, Parsons (cited in Wineberg, 1977) reported that teachers praise and encourage white students more, respond to them more and pay more attention to them than to Mexican-American students.

The nature and degree of teacher expectations effects in a particular classroom are likely to vary among teachers as a result of teacher beliefs about teaching and learning as well as specific characteristics of teachers and students. Once teachers are aware of these issues, they can begin to examine their beliefs and expectations, daily, to ensure that their interactions with students will lead to progress in learning and achievement. A framework for making this possible is suggested in the concluding section, in addition to implications for educational decision making.

## ACTION STEPS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHER AND STUDENT INTERACTIONS

Human development, as stressed by Vygotsky (cited in Rogoff & Morelli, 1989), is inseparable from human social and cultural activities. Children are aided in their development by guidance provided by skilled people. In essence, learning is a socially constructed act that involves establishing relationships with learners and helping them to construct meaning of the world they encounter. In order for this to happen, according to Carkhuff (1993), positive relationships must be established with students. He further suggests that learning may be considered in three phases: exploring, understanding, and acting. Taken together, these three phases acknowledge that learning is a personalized act. It requires the learner to set goals and necessitates a change in behavior.

This configuration—exploring, understanding, and acting—can be used effectively as an instructional framework (Caruthers, 1994) for improving the quality of teacher and student interactions. Used systematically in the classroom, it can lead to increased learning and achievement for all students. Outlined below are strategies and skills that are considered significant components of the phases of exploring, understanding and acting. These are further categorized and described according to the framework. The strategies and skills are:

- expectations/interpersonal skills,
- curriculum development skills,
- instructional skills,
- learning strategies, and
- application and assessment strategies/skills.

## EXPLORING PHASE

During the exploring phase of learning, the teacher focuses on communicating the belief that all students can learn. Interpersonal skills are used by the teacher to involve students in the learning process and to communicate high expectations. Emphasis is placed on demonstrating genuine caring and concern for students, allowing cultural elements that are relevant to students to enter the classroom, and adapting curriculum and instructional practices for culturally responsive teaching. The following teacher behaviors are examples of uses of interpersonal skills to communicate high expectations to students:

### Expectations/Interpersonal Skills

- providing physical closeness,
- demonstrating courtesy and caring behavior and genuine dialogue,
- taking a personal interest and giving compliments,
- acknowledging student feelings,
- providing consistent responses,
- encouraging students to set goals for learning, and
- using instructional strategies to help students learn the culture of the school while maintaining cultural identity and pride.

## UNDERSTANDING PHASE

In the understanding phase, curriculum development skills and instructional skills are used to help students acquire and use knowledge constructed in relationship to their desires, visions, realities, and repertoires of action.

### Curriculum Development Skills

- incorporating multicultural content,
- utilizing community-based concepts and practices,
- using students' prior knowledge,
- providing adequate time to learn content,
- organizing academic content around themes,
- adequately covering a specific topic or subject, and
- exposing students to metacognitive strategies.

### Instructional Skills

- using a sequence for content and teaching,
- establishing culturally congruent classrooms,
- focusing on constructing meaning and explicit teaching of content,
- using cultural references in both verbal and non-verbal forms to communicate academic tasks,
- organizing instruction to build on rules of discourse from the home and community culture, and
- creating collaborative classroom environments.

### ACTING PHASE

The acting phase focuses on learning, application and assessment strategies that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate and apply skills in multiple settings.

#### Learning Strategies

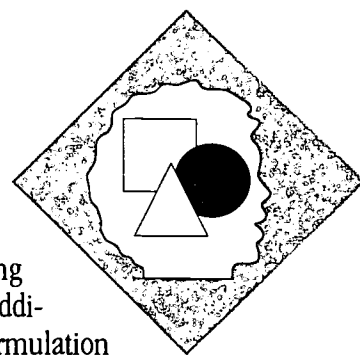
- calling on all students,
- using wait time in effective ways,
- rewording questions or providing clues after appropriate wait time,
- viewing talking and writing as important aspects of learning,
- encouraging the use of learning-to-learn strategies, and
- teaching the codes and customs of the schools.

#### Application and Assessment Strategies/Skills

- helping students construct meaning of experiences for their future lives,
- utilizing life planning skills including decision making and goal setting,
- exploring community and real-world themes,
- involving parents and other community members in authentic ways with the school program,
- providing authentic assessment activities, and
- giving ongoing and specific feedback to students about their progress.

### ACCOMPLISHING THE GOAL

This framework encourages teachers to become facilitators of the learning process and students to take responsibility for their learning and to explore their world. Additionally, it can be a useful formulation for helping teachers develop positive classroom relationships that encourage learning and risk taking. To accomplish this goal educators must:

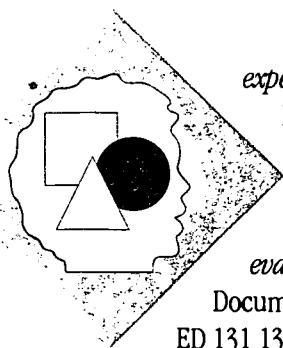


- understand the impact of prejudice, bias and stereotyping in our lives;
- receive ongoing feedback about individual behaviors and practices and ways to eliminate behaviors that are damaging to students;
- give attention to acquiring knowledge of human development and learning including cultural norms and traditions, learner-centered practices, cultural socialization, and learning styles;
- place more emphasis on language development provided through teacher-student dialogue and the experiences of children, including understanding second language acquisition, and the socio-cultural aspects of language;
- use the abilities, skills, talents, and strengths of all students to expand and extend their learning and achievement, giving attention to questioning strategies, higher order thinking, and the application of knowledge;
- capitalize on the social skills that children typically bring to the classroom and organize classrooms around a more active, participatory approach; and
- acquire strategies for improving the participation of minorities and girls in the classroom, providing more academic attention, developing a system for calling on them more often, and encouraging minorities and girls in math and science.

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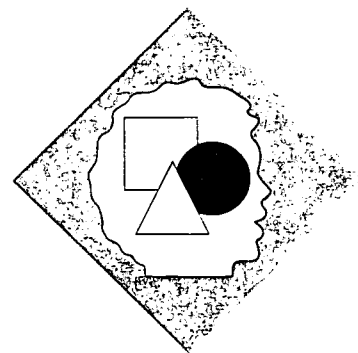
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# INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A KEY TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by Dan Jesse



Parental involvement has been touted for years as a very important predictor of student achievement in schools. In recent surveys, also, teachers focus on the need to increase parental involvement. Strengthening parents' roles in the learning of their children has been identified by teachers as an issue that should receive the highest public education policy priority (Louis Harris and Associates, 1993; in U.S. Department of Education [ED], 1994). Moreover, a 1993 Metropolitan Life survey of teachers found that a large majority believed that the nation's schools could be improved by the federal government if they encouraged parents to be more involved in their children's education (Richardson, 1993).

Yet the quest for effective parental involvement is not easily accomplished without understanding obstacles and how to overcome them. It is important to define parental involvement, to identify types of *effective* involvement and to identify barriers to parental involvement. Only then can we succeed in overcoming those barriers and increasing the quality of parental involvement.

## DEFINITION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The common wisdom is that parental involvement and strong schools are inseparable—that you cannot have one without the other. Indeed, research indicates a strong link between parental involvement and student achievement (Hester, 1989). However, a definition of *effective* parental involvement is not the same for everyone.

Coulombe (1995) reports that parental involvement is often wanted by schools “only when it is needed” (p. 71). Staff of some schools want parents to be involved only in specific ways and at times determined by the staff. This total control of parental involvement by the school represents one extreme. Another extreme is represented by parents who want to run the school, including control over all expenditures, hiring and firing of staff, and curriculum selection.

Happily, reality is somewhere in between in most schools; but it is not exactly clear where this reality is from the multiple perspectives of teachers, administrators and parents.

The bottom line is that parents really do want their children to be in good schools, and educators want to provide those schools. Unfortunately, varying perspectives often get in the way of this happening. What is needed is a framework for understanding these varying perspectives.

Davies (1991) has defined parental involvement from a shifting perspective. As society restructures itself, as communities restructure themselves and as schools restructure, parental involvement also is being transformed. The following table illustrates this paradigm shift.

CHANGING DEFINITIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

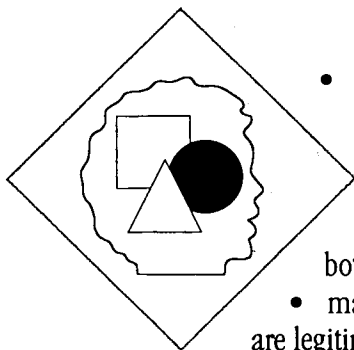
Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
FROM:	TO:
Parent Focus	Family Focus
Family	Community agencies
School	Home/Neighborhood Setting
Eager parents	Hard-to-reach Families
Teacher/Administrator Agendas	Family Priorities
Deficit View of Urban Families	Emphasis on Inherent Strengths of Families

*Adapted from Davies (1991).*

The table illustrates the changing nature of families and communities. Nontraditional family units are much more common than they were in the 1950s, but alternative family structures are effective and should be recognized as such.

New beliefs are emerging about parents and families (Liontos, 1992). These new beliefs include the following (pp. 30-31):

- all families have strengths,
- parents can learn new techniques,



- parents have important perspectives about their children,
- most parents really care about their children,
- cultural differences are both valid and valuable, and
- many family forms exist and are legitimate.

According to Vandergrift and Greene (1992), parent involvement has two independent components: parents as supporters and parents as active partners. Focusing on one of these components alone is not a sufficient approach to parent involvement. Parents can be active, yet not supportive of the education process. They also can be supportive but not active at the school. Of course, the ideal is the parent who is both supportive and active; but this often is difficult when both parents work outside the home, or when there is only one parent in the home.

Whether in a supportive and/or an active role, parental involvement can mean very different things, depending on one's perspective. Teachers may want parental involvement in the form of helping children with homework. Parents may see parental involvement as making major decisions in the school. The truth is that parental involvement can and should take many forms. Parental involvement is reading to preschool children. It is getting children ready for school every morning. It is volunteering at the school. It is serving on collaborative decision making committees, and it is lobbying legislatures to advocate for children. The list of examples could be very long.

One important thing to keep in mind when addressing parent involvement is to avoid confining efforts to restructure parental involvement programs to either personal interactions or policy changes. Done in isolation, neither will be successful (Cochran and Dean, 1991). The following issues, when addressed, can help focus parent involvement efforts:

- define what is meant by parent involvement,
- define what the school means by parental involvement,
- provide examples of parents' decision making roles,
- remove structural barriers, and
- identify who else has an interest in increasing the parent's role in the school.

These are important issues, as the following section's descriptions of different types of parental involvement will illustrate.

## TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In the past, parent involvement in schools meant baking cookies and organizing fundraising activities. Now, parent involvement takes on many forms. Fundraising for schools is just one way in which parents may be involved in the education of their children. Several researchers have identified components of parental involvement. For example, Flaxman and Inger (1992, p. 3) have identified three ways in which parents can become involved in schooling: through direct involvement in school management and choice and by being present in the schools; through participation in special parenting training programs; and through family resource and support programs.

Along the same line of thought, Hester (1989) discusses parental involvement from the following perspectives: parents as teachers, parents as supporters of activities, parents as learners and parents as advocates. Hester also emphasizes the importance of communication with parents as an important part of involvement.

Further, Moore (1991) has identified three approaches to parental involvement in the schools: parents as policy makers, parents as volunteers, and parents as facilitators of children's development. More specifically, when addressing the use of parents as volunteers, Weisz (1990) has developed some suggestions for volunteer activities, which include the following:

- operating a telephone network with other parents,
- serving as a resource pool,
- helping with tutorial and remedial work,
- working with small groups or individuals in classes,
- explaining school programs and needs to the community,
- helping with field trips,
- assisting with extracurricular activities,
- raising money for school projects, and
- helping arrange open house activities and meetings.

Indeed, common themes have been articulated in different ways by other researchers. Perhaps the best known summary of these themes includes Epstein's (1995) six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.

Three common themes for parental involvement have been identified by Davies (1991): providing success for all children, serving the whole child and sharing responsibility. The National PTA also has dealt with defining and

strengthening parental involvement. National symposia and regional meetings have been conducted to clearly define parental involvement (PTA, 1992).

The National PTA Board of Directors (1993) has endorsed three types of parental involvement:

- parents as the first educators in the home,
- parents as partners with the schools, and
- parents as advocates for all children and youth in society.

In summary, the research on parental involvement can be categorized in four ways: viewing parents as teachers, parents as partners, parents as decision makers and parents as advocates.

The effectiveness of these types of parental involvement has been substantiated by recent research. Parents are truly the first teachers of their children. This notion is so powerful that there are growing numbers of programs called Parents as First Teachers around the country. Recent advances in brain research inform us that the first years of life are critical in terms of determining the learning abilities of our children (Sylwester, 1994). Much can be done to help parents make the most out of the first years of life. Helping parents understand that their job is to "turn on" receptors in their young children's brains goes a long way toward achieving this goal.

Parents have been thought of as partners in the educational process. Examples of this role are parents helping children with homework, supporting school activities by volunteering in classrooms, providing language-rich environments and working in partnership with teachers to enhance the learning experiences of children.

When parents are decision makers, they are actually involved in the running of the school through site-based decision making committees. While the evidence regarding the effectiveness of this arrangement is not clear, it is becoming an increasingly popular method of enhancing parent and community involvement in the schools.

When parents are advocates, they are working at the local, state and national levels to impact legislation and policies that directly impact children. For example, the National PTA has advocated for children since the turn of the century; it has worked for implementation of child labor laws, juvenile justice, public health, hot lunches and field tests of the polio vaccine (Cutright, 1989).

## BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Any number of barriers to effective parental involvement can be identified easily by educators as well as parents.

Such general barriers may include distance between teachers and parents, lack of teacher training, race and class barriers, limited views of parental involvement and the public's perception of the school (Moore, 1991).

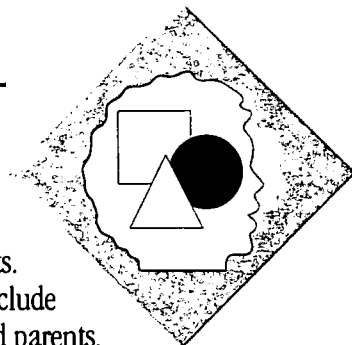
Barriers can originate from beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of teachers and administrators. Lack of commitment to parental involvement, confusion about the role of teachers, concerns about territory and turf, doubts about being able to work with at-risk parents and mistaken beliefs about at-risk parents have all been found to be barriers for schools and teachers. Other barriers include low teacher expectations for at-risk children, schools assuming a passive role, schools not helping parents feel welcome and communications between parents and the school that focus on the negative (Liontos, 1992).

Barriers that have been artificially constructed by parents can exist also. Feelings of inadequacy, failure, poor self-worth, suspicion or anger at the school can create such barriers. Some parents have a "leave it to the school" attitude; others have logistical problems; and some have economic, emotional or time constraints to handle (Liontos, 1992).

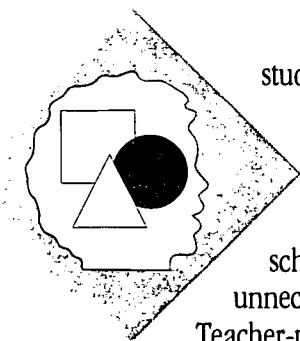
There are also cultural and language barriers to parental involvement (Liontos, 1992). Some Asian parents may feel that it is disrespectful, for example, to talk to teachers because it looks like they are checking up on them (Yao, 1988). Minority parents also may feel intimidated and awkward when approaching school staff. Many times, minority parents are not invited to participate in involvement activities (Chavkin, 1989).

Parental preferences are not necessarily what school people think they are. Parents do not like to deal with school staff who are overly businesslike, who appear patronizing or who talk down to them (Lindle, 1989). Problems at school also can become a barrier. For example, it has been found that parents who become aware of problems or opportunities when it is too late to act upon them tend to blame the school (Coulombe, 1995).

Disagreements or problems between teachers and students are unavoidable. Lindle (1989) has found that when parents find out about these skirmishes between







students and teachers with no information from the teacher, they become angry and are slow to forget. Specific behaviors on the part of school staff may annoy or unnecessarily irritate parents.

Teacher-parent disagreements have been found to increase with the seniority, training and formality of the teacher (Wagenaar, 1986 in Lindle, 1989).

It is important to remember when making efforts to increase the level of parent involvement that parents should not be thought of as deficient. Parents should be pulled into the process of attaining goals related to school success. A philosophy of parent involvement should be developed and an array of activities should be designed to bring parents and teachers together. Finally, it is important to have activities designed specifically for involving hard-to-reach parents (Swap, 1990).

### INCREASING THE LEVEL OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Ample information exists about how to increase levels of parental involvement. Successful parent involvement programs have been investigated systematically by a number of researchers. Jackson and Cooper (1992) have identified 10 factors that seem central to successful urban programs when examining New York City high school projects:

1. leadership,
2. accessibility,
3. time,
4. cultural awareness,
5. active teacher roles,
6. continuity,
7. public recognition,
8. broad-based support,
9. adolescent focus, and
10. recognition of parents as people.

Cultural awareness and recognition of parents as people are important components to this effective program. While these factors applied only to the high schools in this study, their presence does suggest a universally useful focus, as will be seen.

Williams and Chavkin (1989) of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) have identified seven elements as essential to effective parental involvement:

1. written policies,
2. administrative support,
3. training,
4. a partnership approach,
5. two-way communication,
6. networking, and
7. evaluation.

Fredericks and Rasinski (1990, pp. 424-425) have identified 14 ways to involve parents. They are:

1. flood them with information,
2. make it a school-wide effort,
3. recognize students and parents,
4. involve students in recruiting parents,
5. conduct participatory projects that include the entire family,
6. recruit community members,
7. make the classrooms and the school a comfortable place,
8. use the telephone as an instrument of good news,
9. find out why parents are not involved,
10. have a variety of event scheduling plans,
11. operate a parent hotline,
12. use community members to endorse the program,
13. videotape programs for parents, and
14. provide support services like babysitting.

This list of simple strategies suggests that a common-sense approach to getting parents involved often works best. Such an approach also characterizes the strategies for getting middle school parents involved that have been identified by Berla, Henderson and Kerewsky (1989). They include the following:

- develop a policy for parental involvement,
- make sure that at least one person in the building knows every child well,
- maintain a friendly school office,
- encourage parent-to-parent communication,
- hire a full-time parent contact person,
- have a parent room in the school building,
- determine and meet family needs for services, and
- provide translation services when appropriate.

Key points in these and similar lists are the nature of communication and the climate of the building, particularly with regard to how parents are treated in the building.

Schurr has offered additional advice in the form of "sixteen proven parent involvement strategies" (1992, pp. 4-9). She suggests that schools:

1. involve parents in mutual goal setting, contracting and evaluating;
2. involve parents in assessment of school policies, practices and rituals;
3. open a parent lounge, center or resource room;
4. develop public information displays, public service messages and work site seminars;
5. develop a parent handbook of guidelines and tips;
6. hold a weekend or evening public information fair;
7. have a parent and student exchange day;
8. award extra academic credit for parent involvement;
9. have an old-fashioned family night at school;
10. develop a schoolwide communications plan;
11. keep parent/teacher dialog journals for communication;
12. engage in official parent proclamation efforts;
13. assemble monthly home achievement packets;
14. conduct home visits for a special bond;
15. enact a schoolwide homework policy; and
16. have a meet and greet program for involvement.

Recognizing parent efforts, making parents feel welcome in the building, communicating effectively with parents and conducting special events are useful strategies.

Parents want to be equal partners in the education process (Lindle, 1989). Also, parents do like schools providing activities for them. They also like it when the needs of working parents are acknowledged. Parents like it when parent-teacher conferences are arranged around work schedules, but they truly do not care for the conferences themselves due to the formality and limited time typically allotted (Lindle, 1989). Parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent and positive messages from teachers demonstrate a tendency to get more involved in their children's education than do parents who do not perceive that they are receiving such communication (Ames, Khoju and Watkins, 1993).

A strong element of effective parental involvement is communication between parents and teachers. For the most part, parents seem to prefer informal relationships with their children's teachers (Lindle, 1989). They prefer informal, regular contacts through notes and phone calls. They appreciate teachers who take the time to find out about their perspectives. In fact, parents report that a "personal touch" is

the most enhancing factor in school relations (Lindle, 1989, p. 13). Clark (1988; in Chavkin, 1989) further suggests that schools should give parents information that is factual and empowering, along with strategies for supporting the learning of their children.

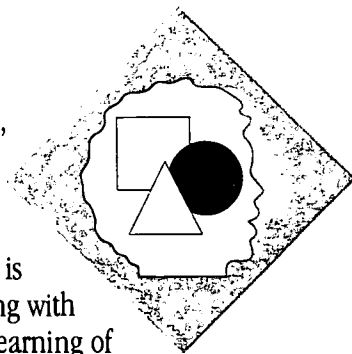
Training in parental involvement has been found to be important for teachers, but many do not receive this benefit (Dornbusch and Gray, 1988). In fact, only about half of the states in the nation have parent involvement requirements for teacher certification (Radcliffe et al., 1994; in ED, 1994). Training academies that address effective parental involvement would benefit school board members as well as teachers and school administrators (Haddock, 1994).

A number of researchers have identified ways to strengthen parental involvement. Comer (1986; in Flaxman and Inger, 1992) suggested that: parents be involved in school management teams, schools develop workshops and tutoring programs, school-parent teams plan a social calendar, and parents serve as classroom assistants. Other suggestions for strengthening parent involvement programs include having convenient meeting times and providing competent volunteers to help children with school work during meetings (Bartell, 1992).

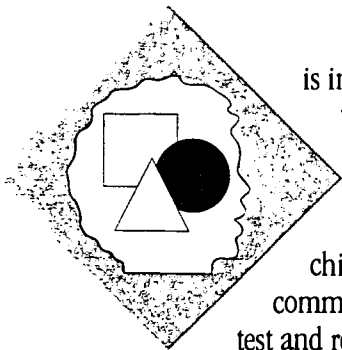
An important fact to keep in mind when attempting to strengthen a parent involvement program is that it may take considerable effort to get low income parents involved (Johnson, 1991). Here are some suggestions that have been made to overcome such barriers (p. 6):

- have regular meetings to discuss homework, behavior and curriculum;
- conduct special parenting skills seminars;
- help parents reinforce reading and math skills in children;
- teach parents how to help kids with home study;
- encourage parent volunteerism;
- encourage parents to become educated themselves;
- make opportunities for students and parents to learn together; and
- offer community education classes to get parents to come to the school.

It is apparent that there is no shortage of suggestions for improving the nature and quality of parental involvement. It







is important to note, however, that there is no one best way for schools to effectively engage parents in the achievement of their children. Each school and its community will have to develop, test and refine their own strategies.

Even though involvement programs have unique qualities, commonalities do exist in effective programs. Fruchter, Galletta and White (1992) examined 18 parental involvement programs for common characteristics. These 18 programs shared the following characteristics:

- strong commitment to involve low-income and disadvantaged parents in activities to improve student achievement;
- origins and sponsorship by external institutions including evaluation;
- significant public sector and private sector support;
- commitment to reduce the gap between home and school cultures; and
- parent empowerment.

These characteristics of effective programs all suggest a strong commitment on the part of school staff. Community support and valuing cultural diversity are manifestations of this commitment.

Parents can be an important resource to schools if used wisely (Weisz, 1990). Common themes appear in much of the research. Lists of suggestions hold many things in common: parent rooms, communication, parenting workshops and activities. Mentioned less often are the roles of parents as advocates and decision makers. It is also important to expand what it means to be a volunteer beyond traditional boundaries. With this in mind, more parents can then be recognized for their contributions to the education of children.

## CONCLUSION

Schools are under increasing pressure due to decreasing resources, increasing needs of children and the demands of the 21st century. They cannot do the big job of preparing our most precious resource for the future alone. It is important, therefore, to take advantage of the resource of those most interested in children—their parents—in new and innovative ways.

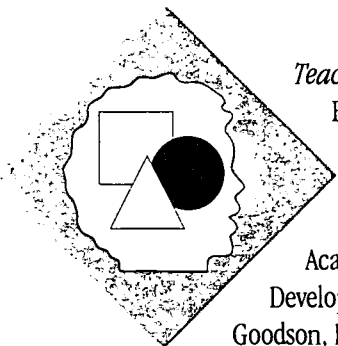
The checklist on the following page is based on a synthesis of the strategies and practices reviewed in this article. It is provided as a tool for schools to use to review their current parental involvement practices and to identify areas in which they wish to increase their efforts. The items in it are meant to be a general guide, not an inclusive list. Each school will have to make determinations about which strategies for involving parents are best for its context.

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## CHECKLIST FOR IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

	Yes	No
1. There is a place in the building for parents to gather informally.	_____	_____
2. The office has a friendly, informal atmosphere.	_____	_____
3. Parents are not viewed by school staff as being deficient.	_____	_____
4. Efforts are made to involve culturally diverse parents.	_____	_____
5. Communication between teachers and parents is effective.	_____	_____
6. The atmosphere in the school is not bureaucratic.	_____	_____
7. There are clearly defined policies regarding parental involvement in this school.	_____	_____
8. There is a school-wide homework policy in place.	_____	_____
9. There is an inservice program for staff that addresses parental involvement.	_____	_____
10. There is an inservice program for the Board of Education that addresses parental involvement.	_____	_____
11. Training programs for parents are available.	_____	_____
12. Parents are truly empowered to make decisions in this school.	_____	_____
13. Families are a priority in this school.	_____	_____
14. The businesses in the community are involved in the school.	_____	_____
15. Community involvement is evident in this school.	_____	_____
16. Parents are asked about their children's thinking and behavior.	_____	_____
17. Parents routinely work in classrooms with children on learning activities.	_____	_____
18. Parents in this community advocate for children's rights.	_____	_____
19. Parents are promptly notified about problems with their students.	_____	_____
20. School staff are aware of cultural and language barriers.	_____	_____



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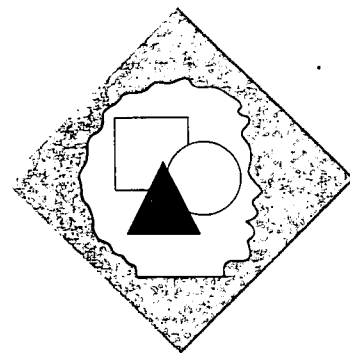
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# THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

by Fran Mayeski



A classroom is a place where students gather to learn. Creating a safe and orderly environment in the classroom is a survival skill for teachers and optimizes the learning environment for students. The strategies teachers use to create such classroom environments have been studied and developed as the area of "classroom management" for many years. This article will examine recent changes in this field and provide concrete examples of new approaches.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the 1970s and '80s, researchers and practitioners examined management issues such as how to organize the room, make it safe and establish the rules of behavior for the students in that classroom. Management is defined by Randolph (1985) as working with and through others to accomplish the organization's goals. The major reform agenda of that period, "effective schools," was focused on the organization level.

## THE SHIFT

The emphasis is shifting from the organizational level to the learner. A pivotal document symbolizing this transition is *Learner-centered Psychological Principles: Guidelines for School Redesign and Reform*. The purpose of this document is "to provide useful information consistent with research generated by psychologists and educators in the areas of learning, motivation and human development. Use of these principles in reforming education will serve shared goals: educational excellence with a focus on the individual learner" (American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education, 1993, p. 4).

This perspective now is reflected in the field of classroom management and discipline. Researchers are focusing on increasing their understanding of behavior rather than on expanding ways to control it (Solomon, Watson, Delucchi, Schaps, & Battistich, 1991). Many of the emerging classroom management/discipline programs are based on the belief that when students' basic needs are met, misbehavior can be avoided. Six of these programs are profiled on pages 28-29.

These "Discipline Profiles" are reprinted from the Fall 1994 issue of *Teaching Kids Responsibility*, a newsletter of the National Education Service. They have given permission to reprint the profiles in this issue of *Noteworthy*.

## BELIEFS

How we work with students in the classroom is shaped primarily by what we believe about how students learn how to behave. At one extreme is the belief that students are passive receivers of knowledge who need to learn to conform to the system and require clear identification of a payoff for their learning. The emphasis is on routine and standardization. The other extreme is the belief that students are active, positive, motivated and unique problem solvers. The emphasis is on choice. It is not surprising that teachers tend to use the strategies that are congruent with what they believe (Short, Short, & Blanton, 1994; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986).

## ROUTINES AND RULES

All classrooms need rules and routines to function effectively. Many research studies in the 1970s and '80s emphasized the importance of teaching these routines early in the year. Some studies were as explicit as identifying that they should be taught in the first four days (Leinhardt, Weidman, & Hammond, 1991), while others recommended it be sometime within the first few weeks of school (Hutchins et al., 1991).

The nature of classroom rules and routines and how they are formulated varies according to the teacher's belief system. Rules often originate from the teacher anticipating problems or glitches in the functioning of the classroom and establishing rules and routines to circumvent their occurrence. The general guidelines for rules are:

- Make only a few rules — neither you nor the students will remember a long list.
- Select rules because they establish an orderly environment and contribute to successful learning. As important an issue as gum chewing may be, it

# Discipline Profiles

Program	Author	Underlying beliefs	Main focus	Students' basic needs to be met
<b>Discipline with Dignity</b> Based on William Glasser	Allen Mendler and Richard Curwin	All students' dignity must be enhanced and preserved, regardless of their behavior.	Problem solving; prevention; student involvement in the discipline process, which allows students to internalize the values underlying desired behaviors.	To feel and believe they are capable and successful; to know they are cared about by others; to realize that they are able to influence people and events; to remember and practice helping others through their own generosity; to have fun.
<b>Kids are Worth It!</b> Based on author's experience as a teacher, university instructor, and parent	Barbara Coloroso	Students can develop self-discipline if treated with respect, given responsibilities and choices and allowed to experience reasonable and realistic consequences for those choices. Children need to be taught <i>how</i> to think, and not just <i>what</i> to think.	Showing students what they have done wrong, giving them ownership of the problem, showing them ways to solve the problems, while leaving their dignity intact	Children need six "critical life messages" every day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe in you.</li> <li>• I trust in you.</li> <li>• I know you can handle it.</li> <li>• You are listened to.</li> <li>• You are cared for.</li> <li>• You are very important to me.</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperative Discipline</b> Based on Alfred Adler, Rudolf Dreikurs, William Glasser, Albert Ellis, Eric Berne	Linda Albert	Students must be affirmed and given the opportunity to share in the responsibility for their own behavior.	Identifying the goals of a particular misbehavior; intervening at the moment of misbehavior; building student self-esteem for future positive interactions; involving students, colleagues, and parents in the process.	To belong; to feel capable of completing tasks in a manner that meets the standards of the school; to believe they can connect successfully with teachers and classmates; to know they contribute in a significant way to the group.

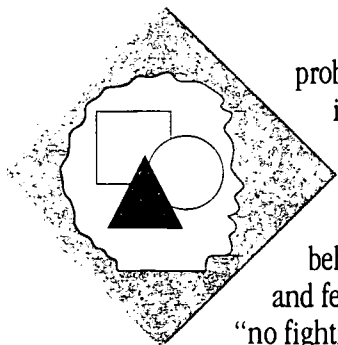
## Discipline Profiles

Program	Author	Underlying beliefs	Main focus	Students' basic needs to be met
<b>Positive Classroom Discipline</b> Based on author's experience as a clinical psychologist with both special and regular populations of students, and work with exemplary teachers to clarify effective teaching practices	Fred Jones	Classroom management procedures must be positive and gentle, must set limits and build cooperation in the absence of coercion. They must also be economical, practical, simple, and must ultimately reduce the teacher's work load.	Managing group behavior in order to reduce disruptions; teaching students to internalize discipline; limit-classroom structure; limit-setting; incentive systems; responsibility training; managing behavior outside the classroom.	To learn self-regulation within a context of clear expectations, consistent limits and cooperation with peers; to belong to a peer group; to make a positive contribution to that group with learning as the reward.
<b>Stress-Free Discipline</b> Based on <i>Parent Power: A Program to Help Your Child Succeed in School</i> ; <i>Constructive Discipline</i> ; legal briefs	Larry Mazin	Successful classroom management and discipline can be achieved with minimal stress for teachers and the goal of self-discipline for students.	Working with at-risk and special needs students; school safety, violence prevention, and controlling gang activity; legal aspects of discipline programs.	To be empowered; to be responsible for their behavior; to cooperate.
<b>Reality Therapy and Discipline</b> Based on William Glasser	Robert Wubbolding	Genuine discipline comes from choices that satisfy a person without infringing on the rights of others. Genuine discipline is internal.	Helping students define their wants, define their behaviors, practice inner self-evaluation and make a plan to fix the problem.	To belong and to be involved with people; to possess power or to achieve; to have fun; to be internally free.

For more information on these programs, contact:

National Educational Service  
 1610 W. Third Street  
 P.O. Box 8, Station K4  
 Bloomington, IN 47402-0008  
 (800) 733-6786 or (812) 336-7700





probably does not significantly impede learning.

- Make the rules as unambiguous as possible.

They should be stated behaviorally: "Keep your hands and feet to yourself" is clearer than "no fighting."

- Select rules that all adults in the building are willing to enforce uniformly. As soon as students figure out there is a double standard, they will test the limits (Hutchins et al., 1991, pp. 3-33).

A unique approach to rules is contained in the "Judicious Discipline" program. In this program, rules emerge from the principle that "you may do what you want in this classroom, unless what you do interferes with the rights of others" (Gathercoal, 1990, p. 20). This program is framed around the rights and responsibilities of a citizen under the constitution. Students develop the classroom rules based on these principles and formally agree to adhere to the rules.

When a student violates the rules, the educator asks, "What does this youngster need to know?" (Gathercoal, 1990, p. 22). In addition to teaching the attitudes and behaviors, educators often must administer consequences for the violations. "Judicious consequences" have two defining characteristics:

1. They are consistent with the nature of the infraction.
2. They reflect the needs and best interests of both the student and the school community.

Eventually, "judicious consequences" also should be designed by the students. Many of the other emerging classroom management programs also suggest, urge or require the inclusion of students in the design of classroom rules.

## MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTION

"The conception of management and instruction as separate domains presents a false dichotomy. As students and teacher work together to construct lessons and to reach instructional goals, management and instructional processes are co-occurring" (Weade & Evertson, 1991, p. 136).

Routines are processes or skills; they can be taught in the same way that teachers teach any other skill. Because teaching should reflect what we know about how people learn, it is helpful to examine the three phases a learner goes through when acquiring a skill or process: constructing

models, shaping and internalizing. Research about these three phases can be found in *A Different Kind of Classroom: Teaching with Dimensions of Learning* (Marzano, 1992); and strategies the teacher can use during these three phases can be found in the *Dimensions of Learning Teachers' Manual* (Marzano, Pickering, Arredondo, Blackburn, Brandt, & Moffett, 1992).

### 1. CONSTRUCTING MODELS

To learn a skill or process, the learner needs a rough model of the steps involved.

Hunter's classic work on "Developing Independent Learners" (1976) focused on the importance of "modeling" routines for students. This concept is inherent in most of the classroom management programs that are skill based.

One strategy that can be used to help students construct a model is "verbalizing your thoughts as you demonstrate the skill or process" (Marzano et al., 1992, p. 62). Additional strategies the teacher might use are presenting the students with a written set of steps for the routine or having them create a flow chart of the routine.

Granted that helping students construct a model of the routines that will be used in the classroom is more effective than the practice of simply telling students what to do, it is not enough. Tempting as it is to mimic the Nike commercials and say, "Just do it!", we need to use what we know about the second phase of acquiring a skill, shaping.

### 2. SHAPING

In this second phase the learner is involved in two major processes. One is understanding the procedure at a conceptual level and another is modifying the skill or process itself.

"Vygotsky (1978) hypothesized that a learner needs the most guidance when working in the zone of development in which she has not yet

acquired a skill but has some initial idea of it—in effect, when the learner is shaping a procedure she has been introduced to” (Marzano et al., 1992, p. 60).

Providing opportunities for the students to practice the skill or process while the teacher is present to provide feedback (guided practice) is an important component of Hunter’s strategy for teaching routines in the classroom.

### 3. INTERNALIZING

To make the use of a skill or routine automatic requires practice . . . and lots of it. This principle was represented in the “independent practice” component of Hunter’s design.

Most teachers want students to internalize the routines of the classroom so they become automatic. Some teachers believe that rewards are integral to this process.

#### REWARDS

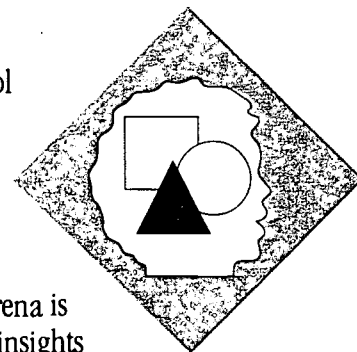
Our beliefs influence how we use rewards. For those who believe that learners require a clear payoff, extrinsic rewards are an important ingredient in the learning process. There are programs that emphasize the use of extrinsic rewards for “good behavior,” and educators who believe that external rewards and punishments are necessary usually feel comfortable using them. Others believe the use of extrinsic rewards is detrimental. Some researchers have found that the use of extrinsic rewards diminishes intrinsic motivation (Solomon et al., 1991). Educators who believe that their role is to help students develop personal control and enhance their intrinsic motivation to learn usually eschew programs that have a heavy reliance on rewards.

#### ASSESSING BEHAVIOR

Our beliefs also influence how we assess student behavior and how we use that information. At one end of the continuum is the educator who believes the authority figure identifies the degree of adherence to the expectations and delivers the consequences. At the other end are those who believe it is the student who needs to reflect on this information and make decisions to alter the behavior.

“Effective learners operate best when they have insight into their own strengths and weaknesses and access to their own repertoires of strategies for learning. In recent years this

type of knowledge and control over thinking has been termed metacognition” (Brown, 1975, cited in Brown and Campione, in press). The work on metacognition in the academic arena is beginning to transfer to our insights about how students need to think about their own behavior.

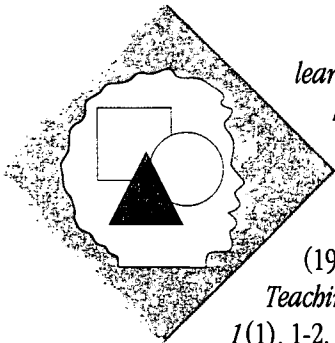


### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Classroom management is undergoing a metamorphosis. The focus is becoming more and more centered on the student and on creating the environment that encourages the butterfly to emerge.

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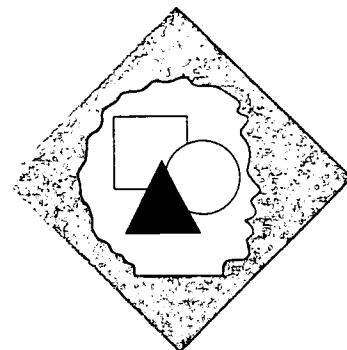
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# EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF TECHNOLOGICAL LITERACY IN SCHOOLS

*by James Fanning*



## INTRODUCTION

Based on the results of a recent research/demonstration project by McREL's Rural Institute (Fanning, 1994), it seems that the understanding and use of technology by some people, and possibly a great many more (Sheingold, 1990), who work and learn in our schools are out of sync with the demands of contemporary American culture. This is a problem since schools are educating young people for roles as active citizens in a society with a dominant culture distinguished by a preeminence in technology. The essence of this technological culture for the individual lies in his or her capacity to access, comprehend and interpret information independently and use it efficiently. An individual's social and economic success has come to depend on his or her wise use of technology.

The skills and dispositions needed for independent and socially responsible use of information must be learned, and hopefully our schools can be places where these skills are practiced and mastered. However, after working at two exemplary sites in the Midwest (recommended by representatives from local universities and from the state education agencies), Fanning (1994) concluded:

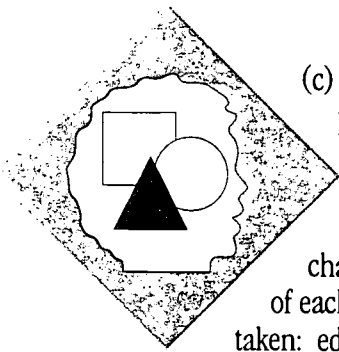
In light of the structural rigidity demonstrated at both sites in terms of scheduling and academic flexibility, teachers desperately need education and training in the philosophical and political nature of schools and the related skills needed to become advocates for the changes they believe in. To prepare them solely for positions in the social technology of the industrial era, for institutions fashioned after the factory model, is to do them a disservice. . . . There was no evidence in Victoria or Vandyke [pseudonyms for the research/demonstration sites] that teachers and administrators had thought critically about what it meant to restructure for the purpose of implementing those goals [preparing young people to be independent learners].

Perhaps the most glaring need that surfaced during the LTL [Learning To Learn With Technology] Project concerns the apparent difficulty in collaborating across subject matter or discipline lines. . . . The lack of interest in integrating technology shown by core, academic teachers was surprising . . . (p. 334)

These concerns are problematic because ordinary people living throughout the modern world have become more and more dependent on technical systems, procedures and devices. Technology dominates and is central to most aspects of contemporary life—from resource management techniques used by public and private agencies to the personal planner and personal computer, from the satellites and escalators of business to electronic gadgets and tools for the home and office, from the synchronized traffic lights and tornado warning sirens of towns and cities to home security systems, from massive hydroelectric projects and nuclear power plants of the national infrastructure to portable generators for hunting camps, from huge mechanized farms and feedlots to garden tillers and “weed eaters,” from the World Wide Web and Internet to school and office local area networks (LANs). Technology has become truly pervasive. To complicate this problem, few people—other than some of those who have planned, designed and built them—comprehend these technologies or can predict the impact and consequences of new technologies on the social, biological and physical environment.

The author proposes that educators and community leaders seriously consider ways to reconstruct schools to have a working and learning environment that requires the practical use and critical study of technology. However, it must be noted that the current structure will have to be “deconstructed” if this is to be accomplished (Cherryholmes, 1988). The outcome of serious reconsideration of the structure of the modern school will impact all of the primary aspects of an instructional program: (a) organizational practices and oversight, (b) curriculum and assessment, and





(c) classroom discourse and practices. Some fundamental considerations should be included in the deliberations before appropriate changes—tailored to the needs of each school—can be undertaken: educators will have to (a) take

a careful look at the pervasive nature of technology and its impact on society, and at its potential role in and contributions to the instructional program; and (b) analyze current practices in light of what researchers in the past few decades have learned about learning, and how this knowledge could and should affect the work of people in the school.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Technology has evolved to become a powerful medium. If technology functioned merely as a set of tools, as the mechanical, user-in-control view of technology holds, the problem would not be so challenging. Schools could simply add a few more required courses and more specialists to teach them. But technology has become more than a set of tools to be picked up and used when a person decides he or she needs them. It has become a required medium that mediates experience in most aspects of peoples' lives. As illustrated in the Introduction, technical systems and devices support, regulate, facilitate and limit virtually all things people do by: controlling energy, regulating how people access and express information, determining how people transport themselves and materials, facilitating the distribution of food, and so on. The various technologies and the expert technicians and engineers that create, promote and operate them make up an elaborate set of systems. When thought of in the aggregate, these interrelated and often interdependent systems can be thought of as one large, complex system, the technological system. Now operating throughout the world, the technological system has become extremely potent since it has become an integral part of the political and economic systems (Ellul, 1980 & 1990).

Consequently, technology should be viewed by educators as a major area for study since it is one of the principal factors determining how people experience and know their world. Yet, few schools require more than a scant one half year of applied technology for a student to be graduated—even then, the course work is more about the technology itself than about its function as a real-world medium within which people know, work and experience. An important aspect of

contemporary culture is virtually absent from the core curriculum of most schools.

This absence deprives the people working and learning in our schools from performing two important functions: first, being culturally literate and technically competent; and second, perhaps more importantly, studying technology critically. The consequences of new and pervasive technology are not all positive. There are costs associated with the evolution of the technological system: social conditions and interaction are altered, the accelerated use of natural resources and related consumption impacts the environment, the stature of social institutions like the family and the community and the related associations and support are undermined. Citizens must be able to evaluate critically the value and usefulness of something so influential in their lives (Bowers, 1988).

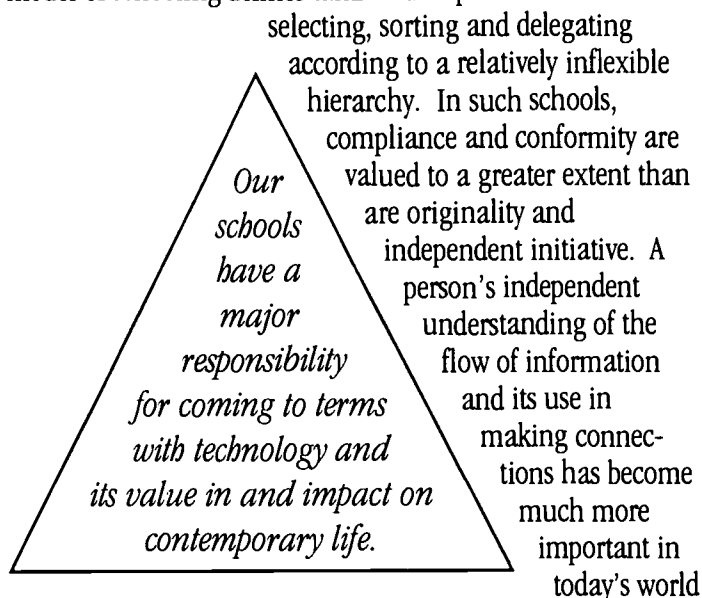
If the heart of our educational system, the curriculum, is so fundamentally weak-voiced on such a major issue as the power and influence of technology, can schools fulfill their obligation to educate citizens fully? Are the students and teachers in our schools unwittingly conforming to a major system that has the potential to strangle democracy itself? When deliberating the considerations offered here, educational leaders must reflect on ways to “illuminate what administrators, teachers, and other cultural workers actually do in terms of the underlying principles and values that structure the stories, visions, and experiences they use to organize and produce particular classroom experiences and social identities” (Giroux, 1992, p. 7).

People learn to guide and focus their actions and regulate their interactions with other people and the environment through culture. Culture mediates our understanding of who we are and what we do by providing the raw processes for ways of doing and imagining and ways of communicating and knowing, and by offering models through concrete and conceptual artifacts that are passed on from generation to generation. In the modern world, much of the complex, technological culture of our society is left to the school for transmission. However, the technological nature of contemporary American culture has not fully penetrated the thinking, language and actions of many of the people directing the schooling of the next generation. Such an important aspect of culture should be part of one of the key institutions responsible for transmitting culture.

Yet, like many other people in our society, the people who work and learn in schools seem to be caught up in ways of saying and doing that reflect a “take-it-or-leave-it” or “it’s-a-luxury-we can’t-afford” attitude toward technology. They act

as if it were an optional “tool.” This attitude seems to be a holdover from the industrial era, the era within which the modern public school was created. Technology at the end of the 19th century was still optional, not nearly as pervasive and integral to the conduct of our personal and public lives as it has become in the America of the last half of the 20th century, defined by many who study organization and productivity as the “Information Age.”

Schools operating within the industrial age model of education do not provide working and learning environments that support the autonomous and independent contributions befitting life in an information age society. The industrial model of schooling defines tasks and responsibilities as



than controlling, arranging and sorting ideas, things and people—tasks that characterize a great deal of what teachers and administrators say and do daily.

In contrast, a person who can and will function efficiently in the Information Age must develop the knowledge and skills to understand patterns, changing relationships and the “negotiated” meaning of those patterns and relationships. Since there are multitudinous sources, quantities and qualities of information inundating every aspect of private and organizational life, no one person or small group of people can control, sort and select the information needed by all of the people working in an organization. All the people working and learning in an organization like a school must screen and assess information for themselves based on a strong sense of personal autonomy and a strong sense of social responsibility (Wheatley, 1992).

Even though many educators have known for some time that autonomous and responsible initiative is natural,

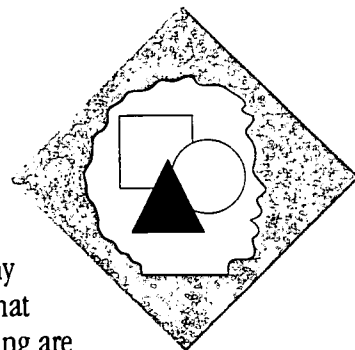
learned and essential (Dewey, 1960), initiative has not been and is not currently being nurtured in many schools. Most schools still do not reflect 20th century philosophy and psychology that tells us that knowledge and ways of knowing are constructed in the mind of the learner through practical experience, not simply told to him or her (Piaget, 1954; von Glasersfeld, 1992; Schwandt, 1994). Recent researchers also tell us that a person's motivation to learn is highly dependent on his or her sense of control, perception of the task and personal stake in the outcomes of acts of learning (Langer, 1983; American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education, 1993).

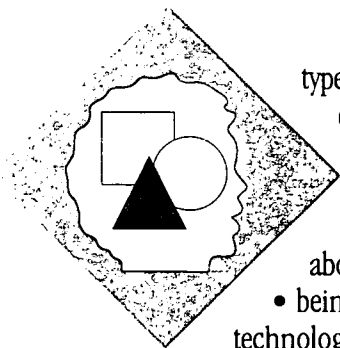
Both of these notions support the need for the development of skills for autonomous and responsible initiative by teachers and learners. And, not so curiously, these are the same skills emerging as essential for success in our information age society. Yet, in many schools the lecture approach is used to “teach” and motivation is assumed to come from graded competition. These approaches do foster a kind of independence, a self-centered disposition. However, such a disposition is contrary to the type being discussed here; the autonomous and responsible initiative needed for success in contemporary society centers on the individual's role in collaboration, information sharing and cooperative dialogue. Learners rarely practice these skills in most modern schools. This condition is in discord with the demands of a postindustrial, postmodern society.

The emergence of the technological system and the Information Age go hand in hand, making computer-based technical systems and devices for information screening and sharing indispensable to most contemporary institutions. Our schools have a major responsibility for coming to terms with technology and its value in and impact on life today.

Ironically, our “modern” schools have instead contributed to discord between the school and the contemporary, unfolding culture by unintentionally operating outside the culture they are serving. This discord is manifested in several general ways by the practices of people who work in our schools. Dede (1990) found them to be based on interrelated misconceptions held by many educators. These misconceptions are:

- technology is simply a way to do things faster or more efficiently (e.g., word processors are used like faster





typewriters instead of typesetting, editing and publishing media);

- contemporary trends in technical innovations are about to run their course;
- being literate in a new

technology is simply knowing how to

operate it (technology is just a tool);

- students and teachers do not need equipment as powerful as that used by business and industry (somehow schools do not have to reflect the same level of sophistication as the culture their students live and participate in);
- the preparation of students and teachers for the use of new technology can be delayed until the technology is actually available or perceived to be needed (knowing the evolution of technical knowledge and skills is not viewed as being very important); and
- technology can be implemented in incremental ways and still achieve a desirable level of performance (the discord between what happens inside the school and what is expected outside the school still is not perceived as relevant).

## CONCLUSION

The manifestations that mark the discord between the school and the greater technological culture are the result of defining the role of the school too narrowly, confining the curriculum to areas of knowledge defined prior to the Information Age. And, since our states have not significantly altered their mandates and guidelines for operating schools in decades (except where states have allowed for the establishment of charter schools and where new “outcomes-based” standards have been mandated), schools still follow an industrial model. Specialists “cover” a scope and sequence of factual information that has been specified by “experts” with students playing a generally passive role despite the overwhelming evidence that: (a) the quantity and quality of information changes dramatically by the day, making much of a course’s syllabus obsolete; (b) people learn best when they can easily construct links for themselves between what they already know and value and the new information they are expected to learn; and (c) technology is a pervasive and consequential system that can be mastered only if used and studied critically.

Technology education has been conceptualized by educators, for most of this century, simply as another special course designed by outside experts in which learners learn to

operate tools. Fortunately, there are many exceptions such as the Boone County R-IV School District in Hallsville, Missouri; the Shoreline School District near Seattle; and many of the Apple Schools of the Future (McChesney, 1995). In other cases, technology has been extended to assist with the execution of operations related to bookkeeping, writing and calculating—still in the form of stand-alone courses focused on tool use. These approaches offer a generally minimal base from which future citizens can only take limited action and make poorly-informed judgments. We would never think of teaching language or music in these limiting ways.

A continuation of this paradigm has long-term consequences for learners who will expect to continue successfully in an era dominated by information age technology and the concomitant fast-paced change in social and physical environments. First, the vocabulary of the powerful language of technology is literally foreign to many people inside and outside the school. As Seymour Papert (1993) has noted when comparing notions of computer literacy with other types of literacy, “Someone who had so minimal a level of knowledge of reading, writing, and literature would be called illiterate . . .” Further, we do not have a curriculum that authentically engages learners in exploration of the real world—an essential ingredient if we are to have an informed and free citizenry. As Giroux (1992) argues, “The curriculum must analyze and deconstruct popular knowledges produced through television and culture industries and be organized around texts and images that relate directly to the communities, cultures, and traditions that give students a historical sense of identity and place” (p. 9).

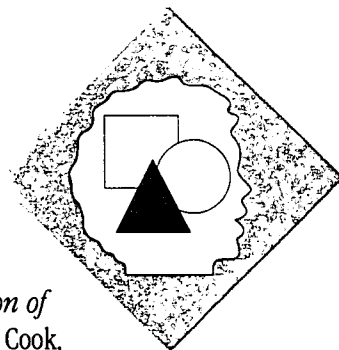
The failure of our schools to respond adequately to the full impact and significance of technology and their failure to reflect what we know about how people learn are a consequence of schools operating within an outmoded structure. An industrial model cannot accommodate the seemingly chaotic flow of information—which seems chaotic only because purposive individuals acting as respected, responsible agents are not screening, sorting, selecting and using information themselves. In addition, the industrial-based, modern school does not have the flexibility or capacity, with its fractionated and sequential organization, to handle the people and information for which it has become responsible in a meaningful way. Ironically, or perhaps ominously, the gap between the “leading edge” technological innovators and the people working in our schools has been a consequence of an institution, and all of its supporting institutions, being left behind by an acceleration in change that has been fueled by technology.



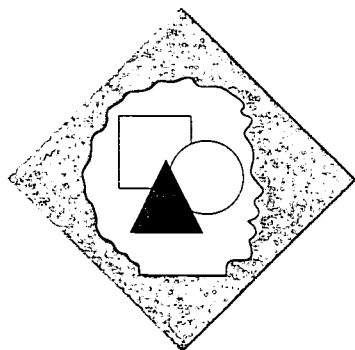
Those who have promoted the minimal and incremental approach to literacy, and who have been the most successful in influencing teaching, have not fully understood how important and powerful technological media have become (Ellul, 1990). Educators must expand their definition of technological literacy. Technology is more than devices to be consumed and tinkered with; technology modifies and affects experience just as other major systems influence what and how people experience their social and physical environment.

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## DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

by Don Burger

The national education goals adopted by President Bush and the nation's governors at the Charlottesville, Virginia "Education Summit" in 1990 gave rise to the development of national standards in many content areas. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) had taken the lead by issuing its "Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics" in 1989. Other domains such as science created committees to attempt to resolve divergent views within content domains and find ways to reach consensus about what students should know and be able to do. Educators in history, social studies, civics, geography, language arts, the arts and physical education have been exploring areas of common ground and areas of divergent opinion in an effort to reach consensus on standards.

The recent re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—now the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA)—increased the importance of having standards for each school receiving federal funds. While some K-12 schools and districts are willing to accept the challenge of systemic change, others will develop goals or content standards and insert them in front of their existing curriculum guides without making any changes in the educational system. The same schools will then deem themselves in the forefront of the standards movement and aligned with national standards.

However, designing and implementing a sustainable standards-based system that consistently yields high student achievement involves more than setting and measuring academic goals. The process of changing to a "standards" frame of reference goes much deeper. Changing to a standards-based system provides an opportunity to re-examine the organizational elements (Cordell & Waters, 1993) of a school system: fundamental purpose, principles, policies, processes, practices, programs and procedures. Standards present an opportunity to examine or clarify these organizational elements as they are viewed by all the groups within the school community—teachers, school administrators, other district staff members, parents and other community members. Establishing clarity on the

organizational elements—e.g., purpose, principles, and policies—may do more to help schools and their communities re-establish trust in public education than many of the current reform efforts which tinker with how schools work—or don't work.

The diagram on Page 39 (Figure 1) is an attempt to illustrate the interrelationships of the organizational elements with classrooms, schools, districts, and communities as systems. The top of the diagram represents these four systems. The boundaries between these systems are permeable. Interaction between systems occurs most frequently with the systems closest to one another.

Within each system, there are a number of organizational elements that direct and validate the actions taken by the system and its members. These organizational elements—purpose, principles, policies, processes, practices, programs, and procedures—are represented in Figure 1 by the diagonal slice (Waters, personal communications, 1995).

Each of the organizational elements interacts with the others, with those that are more proximal interacting most. The outer layers of procedures, programs, practices, and processes are most permeable, are the easiest to change, and offer the least resistance to change. Consultants find changes aimed at the procedural and programmatic levels are the easiest to implement. Organizational elements toward the center of the diagram, e.g., purpose and principles, are less permeable, are much more difficult to change, and involve much greater resistance to the changes.

While educational reforms that tinker with the outer layers are easiest to accomplish, they have the least meaningful, sustained impact on student learning. The

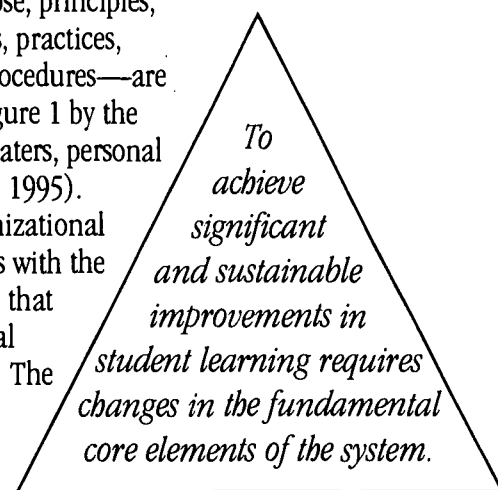
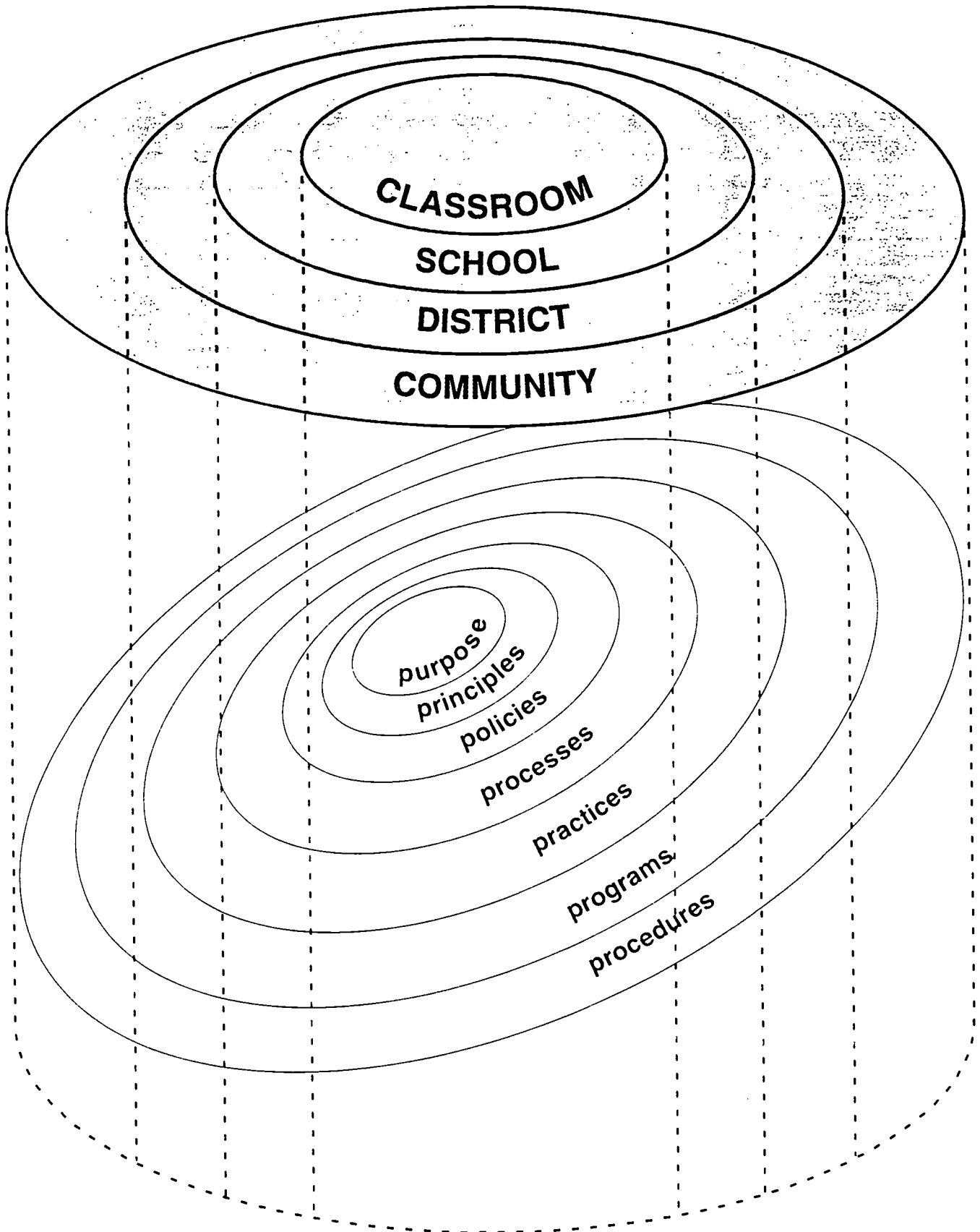
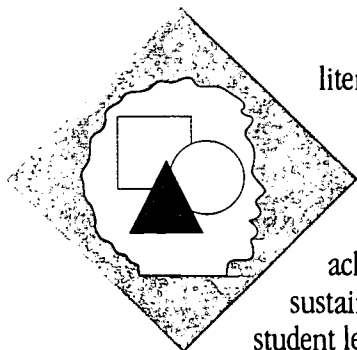


Figure 1





literature is replete with efforts aimed at practices, programs or procedures that have little sustained significant impact on student learning. To achieve significant and sustainable improvements in

student learning requires changes in the fundamental core elements of the system. This article will describe each of the organizational elements and will address the ways in which each of these elements influence the design of a sustained standards-based assessment system.

Each organizational element has a role in directing how schools are run, how students are taught, and how students are tested. For example, the impact of the traditional purpose of schooling was to sort and select students. Traditional purpose was supported by the belief that not all students can learn, that education should “tease out” the very best, and that some students should fail. Consequently, principles, policies, processes, practices, programs and procedures were developed in which all students were taught the same way, given the same amount of time, and tested with assessments based on the “normal” (bell-shaped) curve.

In contrast to traditional beliefs, researchers are finding that, although students do learn at different rates and in different ways, virtually all students can learn. Given appropriate time and instruction and clear expectations, many of the students previously written off can meet or exceed rigorous academic standards. Classrooms, schools and districts that have been successful in creating educational systems in which all students are learning have changed more than educational goals and tests. Successful sites have changed the core of the system: purpose.

## PURPOSE

Purpose is at the core of each system and is most difficult to change. School staff frequently reflect many diverse views about the purpose of schooling. The combinations and interactions of the views of stakeholders form the culture of the school and underlie principles; direct policy; and validate processes, practices, programs and procedures.

Changing purpose is a slow and painful process. Members of the school/community become uncomfortable when different perspectives challenge their own. Resistance to change is always present. Resistance is the system’s way of remaining the same. Staff who are very comfortable with things just the way they are, are comfortable because their beliefs match those of the system. For example, staff who

believe that some students cannot learn are very comfortable moving forward students who are failing.

The central purpose for schooling is at the core of the system. Purpose is reflected by the question, “Who is expected to learn?” Traditionally, schools were designed to serve the best and the brightest, sorting out the others for manual labor jobs. Traditionally, white children of high socioeconomic status (SES) were expected to do best. The traditional educational system was designed to further that end. Standards-based education introduces a different purpose, one that is focused specifically on sustained student achievement for all students—regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Table 1 contrasts traditional and standards-based education systems in terms of purposes of schooling and impacts of their contrasting purposes.

Table 1

PURPOSE	FROM	TO
<b>WHO IS EXPECTED TO LEARN?</b>	Learning is the birthright of white high SES students.	All students can learn given appropriate time and instruction.
<b>IMPACT</b>	Not all students can learn. The best and brightest survive.  Equity means students have equal access to programs that result in unequal performance by groups.	Each student is expected to meet or exceed standards.  Equity means that each student receives the instruction and time required to reach the standard. While all students reach the standard, differences in performance still exist.

## PRINCIPLES

Principles must be congruent with the “core purpose” of the system. Principles provide the direction and guidance for the system much as a compass always registers north regardless of one’s position (Covey, 1991). Guidance is precisely the value of principles. In assessment, there will always be new content standards and new ways of measuring those standards. It is the principles that will provide the

guidelines and parameters for selecting the new or replacement assessment systems.

Seven design principles are required to create an assessment system that produces significant and sustainable improvement in student learning. These design principles are more than a map or guide; they provide clear direction. The seven design principles build an assessment system that is accountable, flexible, standards based, anchored, ongoing, disaggregated, and transition focused (Cordell & Waters, 1993). When tests and assessments change, it is the design principles that remain constant. Any new assessment that is incongruent with the design principles will be purged by the system. Table 2 below shows the differences between traditional and standards-based systems on all of these design principles.

Systems that design for accountability commit to the concept that all students will meet standards. Traditionally, education has sorted and selected students (core purpose), much like separating cream from milk. The "cream" were destined for higher education and the remainder for the work force required in the industrial age. The traditional system filled the need for a large common labor force; consequently, students were identified through a failure process.

The concept of educating all students will be rejected by systems whose core purpose is sorting and selecting. Schools or districts must change purpose before education for all can

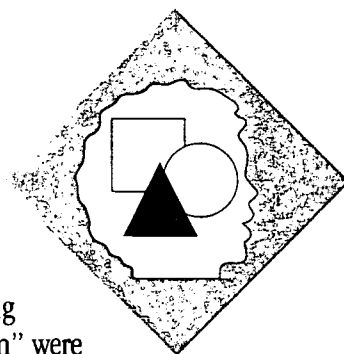
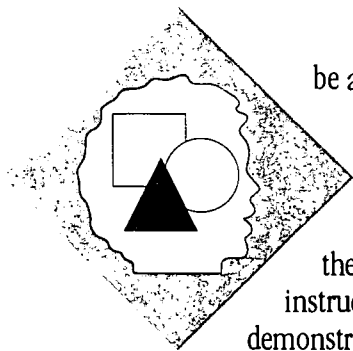


Table 2

PRINCIPLE	FROM	TO
<b>1. ACCOUNTABLE</b>	Test data are not used for instruction or verification of student learning.	Commitment that all students will meet standards by the time they make their transition from level to level or graduate.
<b>2. FLEXIBLE</b>	Testing is a fixed, grade-leveled event that accommodates variation in student learning by expecting a bell-shaped distribution of scores.	Testing is flexible. Students challenge the test when they have demonstrated they are ready to be successful. Differential learning rates are accommodated by offering the tests over groups of grades rather than grade levels.
<b>3. STANDARDS-BASED</b>	Student performance is compared to that of other students even though some students may not have received instruction on the material tested.	Student learning and performance are measured against a standard through the use of valid and reliable instruments.
<b>4. ANCHORED</b>	Student performance is compared to the performance of other students on an average national curriculum.	Internal district standards are tied to acceptable external standards through the correlation of performance on the performance assessment to performance on a traditional norm-referenced achievement test.
<b>5. ONGOING</b>	Testing is an annual, one-time event, usually during October or April.	Testing is a continual process that provides student performance data to teachers and students in "real time."
<b>6. DISAGGREGATED</b>	School and district scores are reported as single mean percentiles. Scores are not reported by gender, race/ethnicity or socioeconomic group.	Scores are disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and are publicly reported. However, schools are not compared.
<b>7. TRANSITION-FOCUSED</b>	Since a normal distribution of scores is expected, there are no expectations that all students will be prepared to be successful at the next level. Students are socially promoted.	Clear expectations are defined for students to accomplish prior to moving from one level of the organization to another and graduating.





be adopted by the organization.

Rather than test students at fixed grade levels, standards-based systems are flexible. Students challenge

the tests after they have received instruction and when they have demonstrated they are ready to be

successful. Testing becomes a success experience rather than a failure experience.

Standards-based systems bring clear focus on high but achievable targets for students to meet rather than comparing students to the performance of other students. Content standards precisely describe what students are expected to know and be able to do. When this information is shared with students, to no one's surprise, the students meet or exceed the standards.

The sustainable system is anchored against measures stakeholders have viewed as valid and reliable indicators. Standardized norm-referenced tests have become the de facto standard for American public education. Any replacement measurement system must be superior to the previously accepted system. As a beginning point, evidence about validity can be gathered by comparing the performance of the same group of students on both the norm-referenced test and the replacement measure. Standards-based or criterion-referenced assessments can be cross referenced to standardized norm-referenced tests by conducting a concurrent validity study (Burger & Burger, 1993). Students complete both a standardized norm-referenced test and a criterion- or standards-based test measuring a similar domain (reading for example). Statistical analysis will provide both correlational data and the relationship of performance standards to percentile ranks scores. The linkage between the two assessments can assure parents that the new assessments are rigorous and that the performance standards are worthy.

Sustainable standards-based systems change testing from an event in October or April to a continual and ongoing part of the instruction and assessment process. In the traditional educational system, the most efficient method of assessment is to test everyone at the same time. Standardized norm-referenced tests provide comparisons with other students in the same grades in the month of October, because teachers are still working on skills students have lost over the summer, or April, because students begin thinking about summer vacation in May. Assessment in standards-based systems is not limited by those parameters. Since the standard is fixed,

students may attempt the test anytime they are ready to be successful. Assessment may not be an event at all. Assessment can be delivered as part of the instruction and assessment process.

Quality and equity, described by disaggregated student test data, are the basis for school improvement planning. Traditionally, quality was reserved for the top five or ten percent and equity meant that all students had an equal opportunity to participate. In other words, quality and equity focused on the "input" side of the system. Standards-based systems change the focus of quality and equity to the "output" side of the system. Quality is the evidence that all disaggregated data reflect attainment of high standards by students in all groups (race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status). Equity is the evidence that there is no difference from one group to another in the percent of students meeting or exceeding standards. Disaggregated test data provide the evidence for quality and equity.

The sustainable standards-based system defines clear expectations for students to accomplish before transitioning, moving from one level of the system to another or graduating. The transition focus informs student, teachers, and parents about the status of the student on the knowledge and skills required to be successful at the next level. Every staff member is responsible for seeing that all transitioning students have met or exceeded the standard rather than just the teachers in the grade level being measured as is common in traditional systems.

## POLICIES

Policies are the third element of the system. The most successful policies are those that match the purpose and principles of the system. Occasionally, policies that do not match the purposes or principles of the system are required by state or federal legislation. Those policies either cause chaos in the system or are enacted but never practiced. Careful examination of a district's policy manuals usually reveals many policies that are never practiced because they are incongruent with the purpose and principles of the system. Policies are required to maintain any assessment system. Assessment policies required in a sustainable assessment system include those that define and set standards and those that determine who, if anyone, is responsible/accountable for learning.

## STANDARDS:

The term "standard" has been used synonymously to refer to curriculum standards, content standards and

performance standards. Standards have come to mean many different things to many different people. Careful listening is required to determine which standards are being discussed. Kendall & Marzano (1995) distinguish curriculum standards, content standards, benchmarks and performance standards. Curriculum standards, they explain, “are best characterized as descriptions of what should take place in the classroom; as such, they address instructional techniques, recommended activities, and various modes of presentation” (p. 20). Content standards describe what students should know or be able to do. National groups developing standards—such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Committee on Science Education Standards—have mixed both curriculum and content standards in their standards frameworks. The term benchmark is used to describe the application of a content standard at a grade level or set of grade levels. Performance standards refers to the quality of the performance deemed acceptable for each content standard. Performance standards will be discussed in more detail along with rubrics in the section labeled “practice.”

In addition, content standards have been viewed from two perspectives. The “literacy” model suggests that all students should meet or exceed performance standards in each content standard. “At the literacy end of the continuum, standards might be described as the minimum requirements of knowledge and skill students should know and be able to do to function well as adults of the 21st century” (Kendall & Marzano, 1995, pp. 13-14). The “expertise” model holds up the best examples to strive for, while expecting only the best to succeed. “At the ‘expertise’ end of the continuum, standards are described in terms of the knowledge and skills that, once acquired, would render students ‘mini-experts’ in every field” (Kendall & Marzano, 1995, p. 14). The standards-based system described in this article uses a literacy model approach in which all students would be expected to meet or exceed performance standards on each content standard.

The process of defining and establishing content standards in policy provides an opportunity to fundamentally question what we believe students should learn and to reorganize the efforts of schooling to accomplish the goals. Table 3 contrasts how traditional and standards-based systems approach policy involving what students should learn. Schools and districts that adopt content standards that are incongruent with their purpose and principles will find that adopting content standards has made no difference in student learning, dropout rates or graduation rates.

Traditional purpose and principles will resist changes to content standards at the policy level. Standards “too shall pass” just as have all the other initiatives which were very different from core purpose and principles.

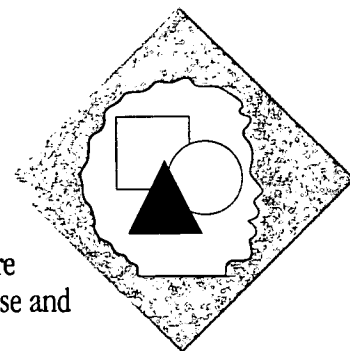
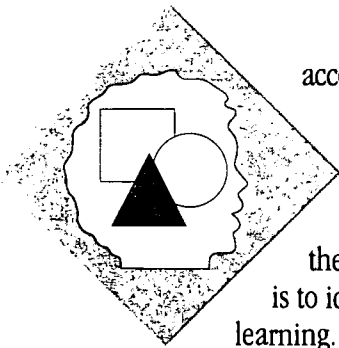


Table 3

POLICY	FROM	TO
<b>WHAT SHOULD BE LEARNED?</b>	Curriculum adoption cycles, e.g., seven-year cycles, determine when content area curriculum will be reviewed and new textbooks adopted.	Members of the school/community reach consensus on content standards, determine what is learned at each organizational level.
<b>IMPACT</b>	A publisher's textbook series is adopted. The textbook becomes the de facto curriculum and teachers teach to the textbook.	A variety of materials are used which provide experiences aligned with content standards. Teachers teach to the content standards.
	Fixed time - 180 class days and 45-50 minute class periods. All students proceed together regardless of learning.	Time varies depending upon student learning. Some students finish early and proceed to more challenging tasks. Some students receive more instructional time.
	Teachers prepare one instructional delivery technique.	Instruction is varied. Teachers prepare a variety of approaches that reach all students.

#### STAKES:

In educational assessment, “stakes” refers to the consequences if learning does or does not take place. Who is



accountable for learning? This is a question that must be resolved at the policy level of the organization. The easiest way to determine if the assessment system has stakes is to identify who is accountable for learning. The options are: no one (the

most popular response); schools, but not teachers or students; or some combination of schools, teachers, and students. If there are no stakes for students, staff, schools, districts or states, i.e., no accountability, then the least expensive testing system without regard for validity, reliability and generalizability will suffice. However, if the system is accountable and stakes are used, then the issues of validity, reliability, and generalizability are extremely important.

“Stakes” can take different forms. Some districts and states have developed systems in which the schools, but not the staff or the students, are responsible for student learning. Students are asked to give effort on testing in which they have little or no interest and which has no consequences. Is it any wonder we do not see superior performances? We are asking students to give their best effort on tests that we do not value enough to hold ourselves or the students accountable for the learning demonstrated.

“High stakes” systems are those in which promotion, certification or recognition can be denied based on performance or achievement as documented by assessment results. High stakes for students might require demonstrated competency before a diploma is issued. A medium stakes example ensues when diplomas are issued for class credits and “endorsements” are added for demonstrated competency. “High stakes” for staff would result if promotion, recognition or certification for staff were determined by rates of success in moving students to and beyond performance standards. “High stakes” might mean reassignment to another level where the person might be more effective or it might mean finding more suitable employment. “High stakes” for schools might require a change in the organizational structure for schools that are unable to move students to and beyond performance standards.

The assessment system must be properly prepared if “high stakes” are imposed for students or staff. The district must be able to prove that (a) what was tested was taught, (b) the reliability of the assessment exceeds  $r = .90$ , (c) students had more than one opportunity per year to attempt the assessment, (d) the tests are fair and free from bias, and

(e) the knowledge and skills for which students were held accountable are really necessary for students to succeed (Herman, Aschbacher & Winters, 1992; Merhens & Popham, 1992; Phillips, 1993). Table 4 contrasts traditional and standards-based assessment systems with regard to stakes.

Table 4

POLICY	FROM	TO
<b>WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE FOR LEARNING?</b>	No one in the system is held accountable for individual student learning because it is the fault of students who do not want to learn or parents who do not make their student learn. School staff are not responsible.	The conditions for success lie within the school/ community. School staff, students, parents and the school/community collaboratively are responsible for learning. School staff and students are directly responsible.
<b>IMPACT</b>	Since no one is held responsible for academic outcomes, mean or median test scores continue to be what they have been.	Students, parents and staff expect that all students will meet or exceed standards. All share the responsibility for learning.

## PROCESSES

In the context of organizations as systems, processes describe how purpose, principles, and policies will be delivered. Within the educational system, many processes must be defined to reach the organization’s goals. The delivery of instruction is an essential part of the processes dimension. New theories about student learning and instruction that are not congruent with the core values of the system are resisted. Table 5 on the following page contrasts the differences in processes between traditional and standards-based approaches.

### DISTRICT LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY TESTS:

A series of process level questions that must be answered involve the district accountability assessment system. What role will the accountability assessment play in the assessment system? What instructional decisions will be made based on

Table 5

PROCESSES	FROM	TO
<b>HOW DO STUDENTS LEARN?</b>	Students learn in a linear fashion at the same rate.	Learning is uniquely individual to the student, non-linear, and based upon previous learning.
<b>IMPACT</b>	Instruction is teacher centered.	Instruction is tailored to the unique needs of the students.
	Learning is passive. Desks are placed in nice neat rows. Students work individually, orderly and quietly.	Learning is an active process. Arrangement of students from individual to group work changes continually throughout the day.
	Lecture is the primary mode of delivery.	Teachers are facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge.
	The distribution of student scores resembles the normal curve. Less than 10% do top quality work and failure is acceptable.	All students meet or exceed performance standards.

results of the district level accountability test? These are "process" decisions that are directed by purpose, principles and policy. In turn, process decisions about the role of accountability assessment impact district assets, i.e., time, effort, and money.

Standards-based assessment systems that are used to inform instruction; require valid, reliable, generalizable tests; and provide immediate feedback to students and teachers cost more money. Typically, less than one percent of a district's budget is spent on assessment for accountability. Requests for increased funds must compete with other policy, process, practice, and program requests, such as wage and salary negotiations, new educational programs, changing

curriculum and facilities. How stakeholders view the role of accountability assessment will determine how it is used and how it is financed. Table 6 contrasts the role of accountability assessment in traditional and standards-based systems.

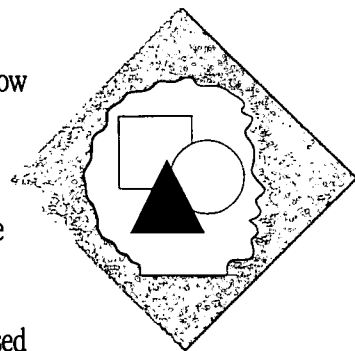
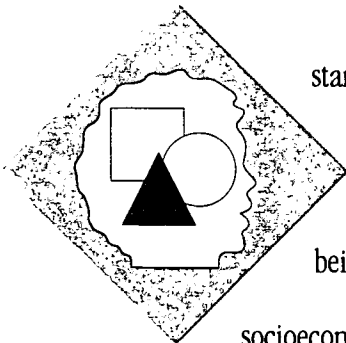


Table 6

PROCESSES	FROM	TO
<b>WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY ASSESSMENT?</b>	Data are not used for instruction since the tests are not accurate measures of the taught curriculum.	Accountability assessment serves as a valid and reliable measure of the content standards.
<b>IMPACT</b>	NRTs provide the best indicator of student learning given time and money.	Standards-based test data are an integral component in instruction. Test scores count and validate learning in the classroom.
	Tests and test scores are not valued by teachers or students.	Teachers and students understand and value district accountability assessments.

Traditionally, standardized norm-referenced tests (NRTs) have been used as the school and district accountability measure. While NRTs do an adequate job of comparing students to other students on basic skills, they do not measure student mastery of content standards. Depending on the definition of what students must know and/or be able to do established in content standards, NRTs may not be valid measures of the content standards. One factor contributing to the lack of validity of an NRT is the method of item selection. NRT items are selected based on their ability to make distinctions among students. Items missed or passed by most all students are not retained because they do not discriminate among students. Consequently, some content





standards may not be measured. Emerging content standards offer schools, districts and states an opportunity to check the validity of the tests being used for accountability.

Some parents, especially high socioeconomic status parents, value

knowing that their student's performance compared well to the performance of other students. But what is the quality of the comparison? Since the test had no bearing on the students who participated in the norming sample, how much effort did those students give? What is the quality of performance at the fiftieth percentile or the ninety-sixth percentile? NRTs do not provide an answer. What does it mean when a student scores above XX percentile when compared to other students who did not care about the test? Schools and districts aiming for a score just above the mean may find the fiftieth percentile not a very worthy target.

If the accountability tests are to align with and measure content standards, criterion-referenced assessments (CRTs) that are valid, reliable and generalizable must be found or developed (Guskey, 1994). CRTs compare student performance to established criteria rather than to the performance of other students. CRTs allow all students who have acquired skills and knowledge to receive high scores. It is important to resolve the format of the district

accountability test first, i.e., NRT or CRT, because non-alignment may still occur between district accountability assessments and classroom assessments.

#### TEST FORMATS:

Test formats are another aspect of "processes." Table 7 contrasts processes involving test formats in traditional and standards-based assessment systems. Portfolios, performance assessment and authentic assessment are the current trend in student assessment. Machine scoreable, multiple choice formats, and tests that require the use of paper and pencil only have been criticized because they do not reflect practices in the "real world." However, there are "high stakes" multiple choice and paper and pencil formats that directly impact students and adults. The American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) are high stakes tests that use multiple choice and paper and pencil formats which college bound students face in the real world. Employers use paper and pencil tests as screening devices for employment which non-college bound students face in their real world. Paper and pencil and machine scoreable formats are just as authentic as other tasks performed in the real world.

The terms standardization and standardized norm-referenced test have come to mean the same thing, when in fact they are different. Standardization refers to the format and to administration procedures where all students in the

Table 7

PROCESS	FROM	TO
<b>WHAT WILL BE THE TEST FORMAT OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY TEST?</b>	Test formats are generally the same, the fastest to administer and the easiest to score.	Test formats must be appropriate measures of the content standards and be affordable for the school, district or state.
<b>IMPACT</b>	<p>The issue of validity is seldom raised or discussed. The tests are assumed to be valid.</p> <hr/> <p>Establishing reliability on performance assessments is sacrificed for expediency.</p> <hr/> <p>Single test formats are the rule.</p> <hr/> <p>Standardization may or may not be used depending on the need to aggregate data.</p>	<p>There is a formal process for determining validity within the context of the content standards and budget.</p> <hr/> <p>Formal reliability is a primary concern whether or not high stakes are used.</p> <hr/> <p>A variety of performances will be used depending on the content standards and budgetary parameters.</p> <hr/> <p>Standardization is essential because data are disaggregated to ensure comparability and to gauge quality and equity.</p>

comparison group take the same test under the same test administration procedures. The advantage of standardization occurs when scores are aggregated or disaggregated or when issues regarding equating tests are raised. It is more difficult to compare students to students or students to standards when formats and administration procedures vary. Standards-based assessments also can be standardized by administering the assessment in the same way to all students (Hymes, Chafin, & Gonder, 1991). Likewise, performance assessments, portfolios and criterion-referenced assessments can all be standardized if process and procedures are the same.

The first consideration in developing a test format is the content standard itself. For example, some content standards ask for pure recall of facts or knowledge. A knowledge-based, paper and pencil test is an excellent measure of content standards that ask for recall of facts. In contrast, content standards that focus on processes usually require a performance or demonstration. However, instances will occur when paper and pencil proxies might be used rather than performance assessments. These instances will occur when validity, reliability, generalizability or cost make the performance assessment prohibitive. In sum, a variety of assessment formats is desirable.

## PRACTICE

In a sustainable standards-based assessment system, the practice element includes decisions about the number of performance levels, performance standards, and the role of classroom assessment.

## PERFORMANCE LEVELS:

The use of performance tasks as learning tools has become a popular method of integrating instruction and assessment. When a performance task is used, the quality of student performance is judged against a predetermined rating scale (rubric). Performance levels refer to the ranges of ratings of a performance task. Schools, districts and states use different performance rating schemes. Some states have two ratings: "pass" and "no pass." Others make finer distinctions about quality by using ratings that number from three to nine levels. The variety of rating levels reflects the many "practices" of schools and districts. Table 8 contrasts how traditional and standards-based systems approach performance levels.

Stakes also play a role in determining the number of performance levels. The percent of rater disagreements increases as the number of distinctions increases. Since high stakes systems require high inter-rater agreement, a lower

number of performance levels is more effective. Four levels are a very common number of rankings. However, with any test, it makes little sense to report scores to students if the judgment is accurate only 50%, 60% or 75% of the time. High inter-rater agreement (reliability) is essential and is independent of the policy decision regarding stakes.

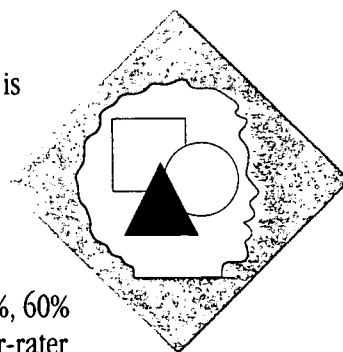
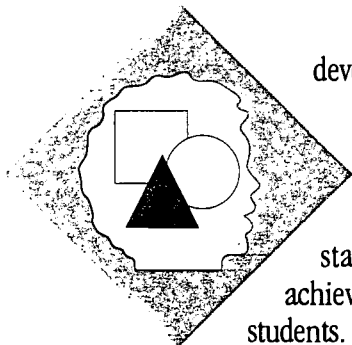


Table 8

PRACTICE	FROM	TO
<b>HOW MANY PERFORMANCE LEVELS?</b>	The number of performance levels is viewed independent from reliability.	The number of performance levels must not compromise the reliability of the test.
<b>IMPACT</b>	A number of performance levels are designated below the performance standard so that growth can be shown when the student did not achieve the performance standard.  Test reliability is not an issue.	Usually one performance level exists below the performance standard. Students are rewarded when they meet or exceed expectations.  Test reliability is a critical issue.

## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

Another part of the practice element is the process for setting the performance standards. While the performance standards may be set in district policy, the process of setting performance standards is a practice. A performance standard defines the quality of an acceptable performance. One performance level frequently is selected as an acceptable level of performance or a performance standard. While the performance standard is the least acceptable performance, it should not be viewed as a "minimum competency," the concept used in the 1970s. Schools and districts have



developed different terminology that indicates whether student performance meets or exceeds expectations for the level tested. Performance standards should set high but achievable expectations for students. Performance levels should

not be set so low that everyone meets or exceeds the performance standard. In standards-based systems, the school/community stakeholders are invited to the table to set district expectations for graduation and for moving from one level of the system to the next. Who sets the performance standards is an important decision at the "practice" level of the system. Table 9 shows how traditional and standards-based systems approach this practice issue.

Table 9

PRACTICE	FROM	TO
<b>WHO SETS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS?</b>	Each teacher sets the performance standards for his/her classroom.	Setting performance standards is a public process which involves representatives from the entire school/community.
<b>IMPACT</b>	Teachers set expectations for their classrooms individually.	Groups of people representing the school/community examine performances and set expectations for all students.
	Ratings and expectations vary from classroom to classroom. Class grades mean different things.	Fixed clear targets are set for students to meet or exceed.

#### CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT:

Classroom assessment is another component of the practice element. Classroom assessments play a critical role in a standards-based system. Teachers need tools to make minute-by-minute instructional decisions for each student.

Checklists, portfolios, teacher observations, and teacher made tests or tasks are the teachers' primary assessment tools. While classroom assessments may not use the exact same items or tasks as the district level accountability tests, they should be measuring the same knowledge or skills in approximately the same format as the district accountability test. Alignment of both classroom assessments and district level accountability assessments with content standards is essential. At the "practice" element level, classroom assessments are aligned with content standards and district level assessments for accountability.

Classroom assessment is most effective if what gets taught gets tested; if classroom assessment is aligned with district level accountability assessment and content standards; and if all these are congruent with purpose, principles, policy and practice. Aligned classroom assessment enables the teachers to make instructional decisions for students on a continual basis. Classroom assessments allow students to practice skills from simple to complex and to integrate those skills in meaningful ways. Students must know what skills they currently have and what they are expected to do in order to meet or exceed the standard. Since classroom and accountability assessment are aligned, there is no time wasted preparing for tests that occur only in October or April.

Teachers enjoy more latitude in the formats classroom assessment can take when district level accountability assessments are legally defensible. Short and long term individual and group performances, projects and portfolios are better suited to classroom assessment than to district level accountability assessment. More time can be devoted to assessments that take longer than a class period as assessment becomes part of the instructional process. Student self-evaluation can play a substantial role in classroom assessment. However, students will be more successful on district level accountability assessments if the classroom assessments are similar in format (Herman, Aschbacher & Winters, 1992).

Many teachers favor the use of portfolios as an assessment tool. Portfolios do a great job of showing students, parents and teachers the progress a student has made over time. However, questions about reliability currently hinder the use of portfolios for assessments where decisions about promotion, retention or graduation are involved (Koretz, Klein, McCaffrey & Stecher, 1993).

The best evidence about a student's learning is collected and analyzed data from both sources: classroom assessments and district level accountability assessments. Once alignment has been established, assessment for accountability will only

verify what students and teachers already know from classroom assessment. Table 10 shows how classroom assessment fits in traditional and standards-based systems.

Table 10

PRACTICE	FROM	TO
<b>WHAT ROLE DOES CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PLAY IN THE ASSESSMENT PLAN?</b>	Classroom assessments are selected by each teacher and the scoring systems are unique to each teacher.	Classroom assessments are aligned with district accountability tests and content standards.
<b>IMPACT</b>	The teacher selects any form of assessment.	A variety of classroom assessments are used, all of which align with accountability tests and standards.
	The teachers use their own system of ranking students.	Common rating systems are used for evaluation.
	Decisions about promotion, retention, ranking, grades, and graduation are assigned to the teacher(s).	Decisions about promotion, retention, ranking, grades, and graduation follow common formats.

## PROGRAMS

Programs are the easiest organizational element to impact but represent the level that has the least impact on student achievement. Programs are those things that can be purchased and implemented as a unit. Curriculum materials and instructional strategies generally fall into this element of the organization. Traditionally, curriculum adoption followed a multi-year cycle. Each content area waited its turn to go through the adoption process. Money was allocated for the purchase of new texts and materials according to that schedule. In between adoptions, teachers would supplement the curriculum with their own materials. Teachers developed favorite units which might or might not

fit with the district scope and sequence.

In the standards-based system, the development of curriculum and instruction occurs after consensus has been reached on content standards and after the format of accountability assessments has been determined. The purpose of curriculum and instruction is to provide the kinds of experiences that result in learning for each student such that all students meet or exceed performance standards (see Table 11).

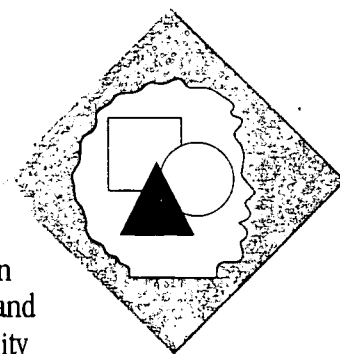


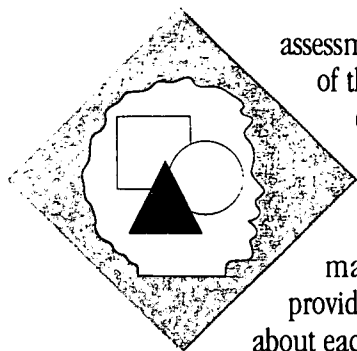
Table 11

PROGRAM	FROM	TO
<b>HOW IS THE CURRICULUM SELECTED?</b>	Cyclical textbook adoptions become the de facto curriculum	Content standards and benchmarks determine what is taught.
<b>IMPACT</b>	One textbook series is used throughout the system.	No textbook, one or several texts may be used across the levels. Supplementary materials may be required for some students.
	One textbook is used in a class.	Many different resources may be used in a class to meet the specific needs of individual students.
	Since textbooks are written for California, New York, Texas and Florida, schools must choose the curriculum framework of those states.	Districts have more control over what students learn.

## PROCEDURES

Data management within the assessment system is part of the "procedures" element of the organization. The





assessment system is directed by all of the previously described elements. Standards-based systems that use student data in the instructional decision-making process require data management systems that provide timely and accurate data about each student. Data management

systems unable to provide data in “real time”—or to handle efficiently student transfers, new students, and students who have left the system— may need updating (see Table 12).

Table 12

PROCEDURE	FROM	TO
<b>HOW ARE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA STORED?</b>	It is not necessary to have current district data available to teachers because the data do not impact instruction. Teachers keep the data they value themselves.	All academic data from classroom and district level accountability assessments are important in making instructional decisions for students.
<b>IMPACT</b>	District level data storage can be on paper. No need for retrieval.  No need for teachers to enter or access achievement data.	School and district-wide electronic networks are essential to store and retrieve achievement data.  System must be teacher friendly, easy to enter and access data.

#### WHEN TO TEST:

When to allow students to attempt or “challenge” a test is another “procedure.” Standardized norm-referenced assessments require students to be tested in either the fall or the spring “norming window.” These tests are designed on the premise of the normal curve where students’ scores reflect a range of readiness. School improvement is gauged by increases in the mean or median percentile rank scores. In other words, if the mean student score was higher than the previous year, the school or district is believed to have done a good job.

Assessments that measure students against standards do not require all testing to be done on the same day. Students

may formally challenge assessments “on demand” when the student and the teacher believe the student is ready to be successful rather than having all students test at the same time and on the same day. We know that all students are not ready on the same day or during the same week. Students will do much better if they can challenge the test/assessment when they are ready rather than when “we” are ready to test them. “On demand” assessment systems give the “when to test” decision to the teacher and the student (see Table 13).

Table 13

PROCEDURE	FROM	TO
<b>WHEN TO TEST?</b>	Accountability tests are given during the norming window in the fall or spring. All students take the test at the same time.	Standards-based tests are offered “on demand” when the teacher and the student believe the student will be successful.
<b>IMPACT</b>	All students test at the same time, ready or not.  Since scope and sequence of the norm-referenced test usually does not match the curriculum, students often test on material they have not studied.	Students test when they are ready.  Since assessments, curriculum and instruction are aligned with content standards, students test on what they have been taught.

#### WHEN TO SCORE AND REPORT:

Standardized norm-referenced tests are machine scored in the months following test administration. Scoring by the testing services takes approximately four weeks or more. It is not unusual for data to be available to teachers when the students are ready to leave school for the summer or when teachers return in the fall. Local scoring options have reduced the delay in returning data to teachers, but the volumes of paper generated are cumbersome and difficult for teachers to manage.

Standards-based systems that allow on-demand assessment require “real time” scoring systems. Scoring systems must be devised that provide immediate and continuous scoring and delivery of data to students, parents and teachers. Achievement data have the most instructional impact when they are available immediately.

These systems also allow students another chance to meet or exceed performance standards. If students are offered more than one chance, issues around alternative formats and testing intervals need to be resolved (see Table 14).

Table 14

PROCEDURE	FROM	TO
<b>WHEN TO SCORE AND REPORT?</b>	Scoring may occur anytime after test administration. Reports are developed the next fall.	Scoring and reporting need to be continuously available to provide students, teachers, and parents with current and accurate achievement data.
<b>IMPACT</b>	Scoring is done in bulk and is sent away for scoring by a service company.	Scoring systems must be developed locally to provide quick and accurate service and must automatically download into individual student data bases.
	Reports may be given to the parents and teachers at the end of the school year or the following fall.	Reports are returned to the students, parents and teachers within days of the challenge—in "real time."

#### REPORTING FORMATS:

Teachers, students and parents want reporting formats that are easy to understand. They do not want reports they have to read and analyze. Standardized norm-referenced tests have met this need by use of one chart formats comparing the student's achievement to the national sample of other students on each of the basic skill areas. Similarly, new assessments need to provide parents with crisp and clear messages about what their children know, what they can do, and what they need to learn. Standards-based systems using combinations of text and graphic formats are easier for students, parents and teachers to understand (see Table 15).

#### CONCLUSION

The classroom, school, district and community are all interacting organizational systems. Within each system,

organizational elements direct how the organization functions. Purpose is the core element. It is the most difficult to change and is protected by the other elements—principles, policies, processes, practices, programs, and procedures. However, changing the more central elements has the most dramatic and sustained impact on student achievement. More distant elements—processes, practices, programs and procedures—are much easier to change but have the least sustained impact on the system.

Standards present educators with an opportunity to make changes in the core elements of the educational system. However, initiatives that attempt to change the purpose, principles and policies of the organization will be purged unless the individuals in the system can be taken through a change process. Changing the culture of the school or district requires a commitment of time and energy to the change process. There is no magic bullet. There is no package that can be purchased that has sustained systemic impact. Teachers, administrators, parents, and other members of the school community have to value public education enough to be willing to do the hard work in the process of change. Only then will sustained high achievement for all students be attained.

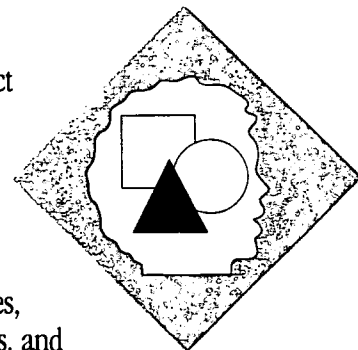
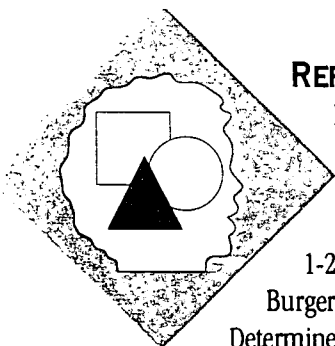


Table 15

PROCEDURE	FROM	TO
<b>HOW ARE REPORTS FORMATTED?</b>	A single chart that compares the student's score with national sample on basic skills.	An individual report for each content standard that compares the student's accomplishment against a performance standard.
<b>IMPACT</b>	One chart covers all basic skill areas.	One report for each content standard.
	Student scores are compared to a norming sample.	Student accomplishments are compared to a performance standard.

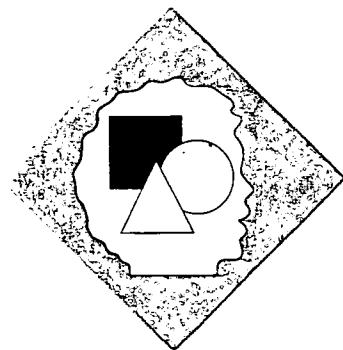


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# DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

by Susan Toft Everson



*Our last observation on the school process issues . . . concerns the difficulty of making any observations about the factors that are associated with "effectiveness" independently of the local or national context of the schools concerned.*

(Creemers & Reynolds, 1989, p. 381)

During the past twenty or more years, a growing knowledge about school improvement, school effectiveness and school change has been applied in many schools and districts. Additionally, the increasing knowledge about successful practices in areas such as curriculum, instruction and leadership has been applied. These applications have informed educators about educational reform. However, while we have learned a great deal about educational change and about specific improvements, we still lack a very clear understanding of contextual influences on educational change and practice improvements. Context refers to the organization into which improvements are placed and within which change processes are practiced. The hope has been that school organizations are adaptive, learning systems that are receptive to change and continually modify assumptions, purposes and behaviors. Unfortunately, that hope is often dashed in the real world of educational reform.

For more than a decade, educational leaders have managed educational improvement and reform projects in which it is assumed that the improvement of schools and school districts will benefit students. That assumption is based on research and development literature that describes "best practices" in such areas as educational change, policy, management, leadership, instruction, curriculum, assessment, professional development and so on. With a goal that every student should succeed, educators have searched for the right combination of best practices to implement in order to reach that goal.

While this sounds like a reasonable approach to improve education, large scale success has been limited. Certainly, individual examples verify that some practices have some

impact in some settings; the problem comes in verifying long-term impacts that result from implementing combinations of practices in a variety of districts, schools and classrooms. While there are principles of best practice, every organization in which they are applied requires the people involved to study and use knowledge of best practices in idiosyncratic ways that fit their school.

Educational leaders are beginning to understand just how powerful, comprehensive and complicated organizational influences are. Thus, an interest in systems research and its implications for action has grown dramatically in the past few years. An organization is the system into which interventions are placed. What do we know about that system and what can we learn about the system that will enhance its development so that learning at all levels is optimal?

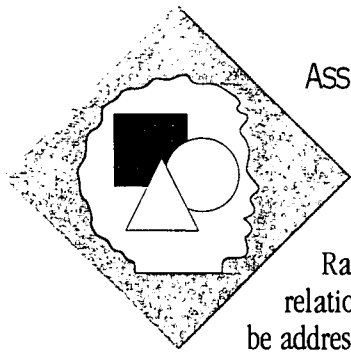
## ASSUMPTIONS

In order to improve schooling and learning so that learners benefit, assumptions about how organizations and systems develop become critically important. Articulating assumptions that are based in the research literature about organizational behavior (e.g., Argyris and Schon, 1974; Fullan, 1991, 1993; O'Toole, 1995; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 1992) provides a framework from which educational leaders can address the systems they must manage as they work to improve schooling and learning. The following assumptions begin to build that framework.

### ASSUMPTION 1

There is a gap between current organizational practices and the knowledge about successful organizational practices. Closing the gap often results from an event or crisis and often exists for only a limited time (e.g., a principal leaves and the school returns to old practices). Sustainability for organizational growth—or working to "close the gap" between current organizational practice and best practice—requires time, energy and a tolerance for risk.





#### ASSUMPTION 2

So many organizational changes occur continuously that it is futile to address only one aspect of change.

Rather, the dynamics and relationships among changes must be addressed systemically. There are so

many interacting variables that controlling them is impossible; rather, the goal is to increase the probability that the change effort will approximate intended outcomes.

#### ASSUMPTION 3

All systems continue to adapt to and accommodate for new information. The key is to adapt and accommodate in progressive, constructive ways rather than to adapt in order to protect existing practices.

#### ASSUMPTION 4

Closed systems do not survive; they wither from lack of input. Open systems adapt and grow, yet there is no guarantee that the adaptation will be constructive (see assumption 3).

#### ASSUMPTION 5

The larger the system, the more variables there are. Each can be catalytic so that complex systems are dependent on a huge number and variety of interacting variables. Acceptance, rejection and sustainability of new information are related to the catalytic functions of variables within the system.

#### ASSUMPTION 6

By definition, learning is change. In social systems (as in organic systems), learning (adaptation) occurs because of the input of new information. The concern then is about the quality of learning and its influence on growth rather than maintenance.

Based on these assumptions, the definition of a learning organization is an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at modifying its original assumptions, purposes and behaviors to reflect new knowledge and insights (adapted from Garvin, 1993, p. 98).

Educational organizations, in general, and schools, in particular, have been extraordinarily successful at adaptive learning that maintains current practice. In Chris Argyris' words (Argyris & Schon, 1974), this type of learning is

"single-loop." In "single-loop" learning, consequences or results are reviewed in a way that reinforces the actions or behaviors that caused them. Using the aforementioned definition of a learning organization, schools, as well as most other organizations, traditionally have not been learning organizations. In order to become learning organizations, schools need to engage in Argyris' "double-loop" learning, a practice that demands open discourse about individual and organizational beliefs and purposes as well as behaviors, actions and consequences.

#### SUGGESTIONS

What are some suggestions that will help organizations initiate and develop this type of "double-loop" learning?

CAREFULLY MANAGE ROUTINE DAILY TASKS WHILE CHANGING TO A NEW SYSTEM

*Implementing school reform is like trying to put your pants on while you are running as fast as you can.*

(Lezotte, 1990)

The educators who carry the greatest responsibilities for improved learning work in complex organizations that must be managed on a daily, if not hourly, basis. Managing policies; time; schedules; work tasks; facilities; resources (human, fiscal, material, etc.); and numerous other tasks are critical functions in the life of any school. Unfortunately, most leaders who guide school reform efforts miss, perhaps ignore, pleas from school participants for assistance to maintain a management system that supports a semblance of stability while they study and apply innovations that will turn that same system upside down.

*Educators are besieged by a multiplicity of demands which preclude adequate time for planning, reflecting, collaborating, researching, and assessing. The shortage of time is a problem in all schools and is one of the most complex and challenging problems teachers face every day. These limitations impact the working lives of teachers and other school employees, causing frustration and inhibiting change. The primary dilemma is that school personnel require time to restructure, while restructuring time.*

(Nelson & Associates, 1993, p. 1)

In some of the literature on organization development, the term "system entry" is used to describe the start-up process whereby an intervention joins the system in which change occurs (Dalin & Rolff, 1991; Dalin & Rust, 1983; Schmuck & Runkel, 1988). System entry is precisely what the process is. A new system is not being created; an existing system is being modified. School development works in the same way. No district can suggest that the students stay home for a year while the educators study, plan and implement innovations. Instead, the schools function while the interventions are introduced. The existing management system must be healthy enough to function and must be sustained in a parallel path to the path of the improvement effort. When that existing system has weak spots or falters, those troubles must be faced in order to protect the energy and time that are needed to support the implementation of innovations. Otherwise, that energy and time are continuously used to address the management problems.

#### USE INFORMATION TO MANAGE AND MAKE DECISIONS

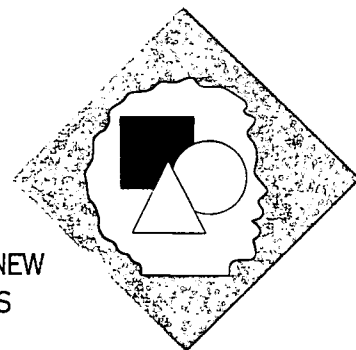
*They [organizations] have capacities for generating and absorbing information, for feedback, for self-regulation. In fact, information is an organization's primary source of nourishment; it is so vital to survival that its absence creates a strong vacuum.*

(Wheatley, 1992, p. 107)

The literature on organizational change is clear about the value of using information to guide development. A feedback loop is essential to organizational learning. Feedback occurs as part of an information system that exists in every school. That information system needs to be comprehensive, multi-leveled, accurate, clear, applicable to practice and immediate. Current systems are often compartmentalized, unusually obtuse, irrelevant to practice, or the feedback loop between data collection, analysis, reporting, and application is extremely long. Matthew Miles (1992) clearly articulated the importance of feedback in successful school change efforts. And, study after study have revealed that failures of school change programs often occur because of the lack of effective feedback systems. The current interest in action research is a move in the right direction for improving classroom practices. Expanding the same concept to the school level provides a needed feedback system regarding the success or failure of organizational practices

related to growth and development.

#### PROVIDE TIME AND LEADERSHIP FOR TRANSITION FROM OLD TO NEW ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES



*Unless transition occurs, change will not work.*  
(Bridges, 1991, p. 4)

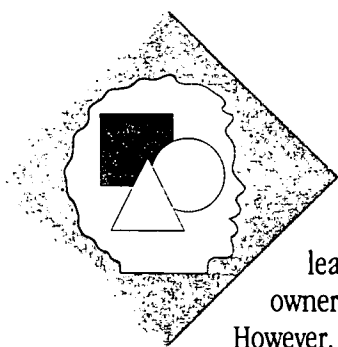
Even though an effective information system may exist, the needed changes that such a system demands greatly affect the people and organizations who must make those changes. Within each identified realm of learning—personal, organizational, technical—there are research-based suggestions about approaches to manage transitions that occur when changes are systematically introduced, implemented and institutionalized—or when changes occur informally and unpredictably (Bridges, 1991; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Hall & Loucks, 1979; Louis & Miles, 1990).

Furthermore, in the last few years some experts have begun to suggest a more comprehensive transition management system (see Michael Fullan's *Change Forces*, 1993, for an example). Transition management is not an event. People, organizational structures, and relationships to external systems will transform as school development activities occur. At each level, leaders need to attend to the transition that must take place—the space between the old and the new. For example, Deal & Kennedy (1982) suggest ceremonies to formalize mourning the loss of old practices and procedures. Whatever the form, transitions need time and support if the organization develops successfully.

#### INCREASE THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ORGANIZATION

*In the case of an organization, much depends on the nature of the assets and commitments. Every manager of a large-scale enterprise knows the difference between the kinds of organizational commitment that limit freedom of action and the kinds that permit flexibility and easy changes of direction. But few understand how essential that flexibility is for continuous renewal.*

(Gardner, 1981, p. 52)



Stories about organizational change are full of descriptions of empowered stakeholders, those who participate in organizational learning activities and have ownership of the task at hand.

However, the rhetoric about stakeholder engagement and the realities in practice often are quite different. The gap between what is expressed and what is done (Argyris & Schon, 1974) regarding the extent of participant engagement in organizations is frequently quite large.

Recently, experts have studied and written about the characteristics of leaders who are powerful as well as inclusive, collaborative and effective. In other words, such people work in an environment where they can be equitable, interdependent and investigative. This is a culture in which stakeholders are effectively engaged. (For examples, see Bolman & Deal, 1995; Covey, 1989; Gardner, 1990.) Specifically, Sergiovanni (1990) wrote about these kinds of educational leaders, people who are "of service," adding value to others. Such leadership results in a stakeholder "covenant" to engage in continuous learning and development. In order to develop and support a learning organization in which people are actively engaged, open discourse among stakeholders, collaborative work designs, and respectful leadership are essential.

Effective management of routine details, use of information, and attending to transitions will work only if the people within each system are actively engaged in the work to be done. They must be collaborators in an organizational learning process. While implementing one of the suggestions described above may help move an organization forward, the application of all four suggestions, in a comprehensive approach, will be far more powerful in producing the organizational learning that is critical to any school where growth is the norm and learners continually reap the rewards.

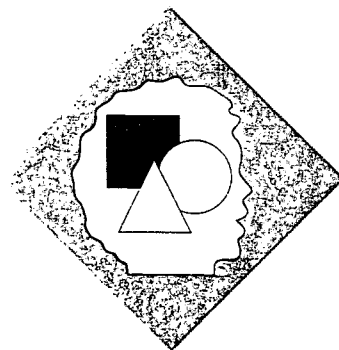
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# A FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING SYSTEMIC REFORM

by J. Timothy Waters and Franklin D. Cordell



The concepts, tools and skills presented in this article are based on well-confirmed research and were assembled and sequenced over several years of experience. The authors, who were at that time a superintendent and a school board member, were the architects of change in a district beset by all the demands, problems, complexities and personalities associated with change in a complex human organization. The reform enterprise undertaken by this district's leaders was not a controlled experiment but a responsible effort to bring about systemic change in an average-sized school district. The effort was districtwide. It involved thirteen thousand students, twenty-one campuses, six hundred and fifty teachers, five hundred support staff and thousands of families. The reform effort encompassed all dimensions of the organization, from creating a new management information system to training teachers in team play to nurturing hundreds of preschool children. Throughout the project, decisions were systematically informed and documented by action research.

## RESULTS IN THE REAL WORLD

The school improvement project resulted in outstanding improvements in student performance. Not only did the most gifted improve, but those struggling with school learning also made excellent gains. In 1989 fifty-four percent of the high socioeconomic status (SES) students were performing at or above standard on the writing assessment. By 1994 ninety-two percent were successful. Only twenty-two percent of low SES students were performing at or above standard in 1989, but by 1994 that had increased to eighty-three percent.

The project improved student performance by supporting organizational learning, introducing new norms into the organizational culture, building public support, raising expectations for all students and improving assessment and instructional systems (Cordell & Waters, 1993). The district's leaders systematically changed policies, procedures and practices to lead and support those changes.

Most educational leaders know that some combination of activities will create sustainable systemic improvement

without creating monumental resistance in the community or self-defeating conflict within the organization. But which combination of activities should be chosen and in what sequence must they be implemented? Which activities are essential? Leaders ask, "How are we to respond to conflicting mandates and demands?" "How can we avoid the pitfalls plaguing others—the leaders who set out early but whose efforts are now mired in conflict and political bickering?" Many leaders ask what went wrong, and what they can do to create sustainable systemic improvement.

No single source provides answers to these questions and few consultants could help with the overall project. Literature on managing change, quality management, learning, thinking, instruction, curriculum development, constructivism, and motivation is so great as to overwhelm already busy leaders.

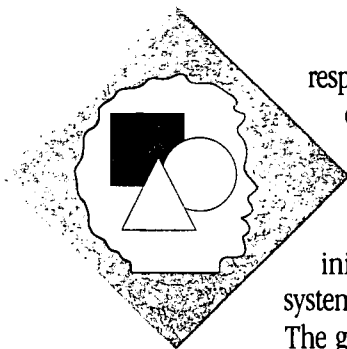
Models of organizational development abound, but most of them focus on the technical dimension of change and fail to help leaders of organizations who must make deci-

sions and act in the light of public attention. Anecdotal stories and case studies of successful schools and school systems help but are limited because conditions of the anecdotes fail to match the circumstances of the district needing help.

This article provides the reader a project management framework for organizing relevant theory, important research, and practical experience to help answer the questions, "Where do I start?" and "What do I do now?" The

*Most educational leaders know that some combination of activities will create sustainable systemic improvement without creating monumental resistance in the community or self-defeating conflict within the organization. This . . . project management framework [will] help answer the questions, "Where do I start?" and "What do I do now?"*





response presented here is organized around seven task areas (projects) in which practitioners must simultaneously design and initiate activities to accomplish systemic change.

The goal of the kind of systemic educational reform effort discussed here is to improve both the quality and equity of learning and achievement—that is, to increase learning and achievement for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or family background. The authors know that this goal can be achieved if this framework is used. Using the experience and information offered here will result in improvements in both the quality and the equity of learning and achievement in those school systems with the determination to produce both. To do so, however, will require courage, commitment, focus and almost limitless energy. Producing desired results will take considerable time, perhaps as long as seven years.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

This work is an extension of *Improving Student Performance* (Cordell & Waters, 1993). In that monograph the authors articulated five guiding principles and eight processes to be used to realize them. The approach outlined below applies the techniques and concepts of project management to the processes of the school district reform effort. This approach provides several practical advantages for practitioners by making the leadership functions required more concrete.

The overall reform effort of improving student performance by building “Championship Schools” is broken into seven projects, each described in terms of milestones and tasks. This article does not specify steps to complete those tasks. The steps to be taken, and the order in which they must be taken, are to be defined within the culture and organization of the local district and community. Rather, the focus here is on the nature and essential elements of the projects. The projects are interdependent. Progress in any one project may be dependent upon reaching a milestone in another project and vice versa, and changes in any area inevitably will create ripple effects in one or more of the others. The following section will define the seven interdependent projects and describe the work to be accomplished in each.

## PROJECT 1: PLAN AND INTEGRATE PROJECTS

Project 1 is a kind of super project in which the district’s leadership team clarifies, sequences and integrates the other six projects. Planning and integration are ongoing rather than being completed prior to starting the other projects.

Planning is the formal starting point for systemic change. An accurate assessment of current realities is made and a vision of a preferred future is created. Properly approached, planning can create the excitement and momentum necessary to move the system out of equilibrium. Project integration is the process of monitoring, sequencing and supporting the other six projects and continually making the connections between them.

The approach suggested here is whole systems planning (Weisbord, 1987). Its purposes are to:

- create a shared vision of a preferred future among a critical mass of interested individuals,
- identify the sequence of activities necessary to realize the vision,
- establish the benchmarks to be used to mark progress,
- formalize timelines,
- assign responsibilities, and
- guide resource allocation.

Whole systems planning is structured to involve large numbers of individuals from various constituencies in a five phase process. The phases are:

1. Identify the trends that may affect the school or school system. These trends can be listed and discussed in terms of what is probable versus what is improbable, and those that are desired versus those that are not. This phase is sometimes described as an external scan.
2. Assess which of these trends will affect the quality and equity of outcomes of the system and how the system will be affected.
3. Analyze how the system evolved to its current state. This phase includes the history of the system as well as the stories people share about the system (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Additionally, this phase includes a discussion of what people are most proud of in the system, as well as things about which they are most sorry (Weisbord, 1987, p. 291).

4. Agree on the goals of reform and a vision of the preferred future for the system. Prior to beginning the plan development process, it is essential that the stakeholders clarify their most deeply held values about learning, children, the system, and other important issues because the vision should be grounded in those shared values.
5. Identify the important strategies that must be used to create the preferred future. Specific data must be collected prior to beginning. These data—in addition to standard demographic, financial, and performance information—should include the current perceptions of school held by key constituencies both inside and outside the system.

The plan that comes out of the process should address, in some fashion, the other six design tasks, or projects, listed below. Each of these will have to be addressed as issues and problems if they are not incorporated into the plan. Additionally, the plan should produce a “chartering” of the process and practices that will be required in order to realize the preferred future. A charter represents the symbolic as well as real beginnings of the process that will create the change to move the system from the present, the current practices and culture, toward the preferred future, the achievement of the goals. It should call on those who are part of the planning process and those who support its result to make a commitment to also support the changes that the plan will create and the people who will be expected to initiate the changes.

A thoughtfully developed plan, continually monitored and periodically updated, can create extraordinary excitement, enthusiasm and momentum. It serves as the basis for connecting and integrating all of the other six design tasks.

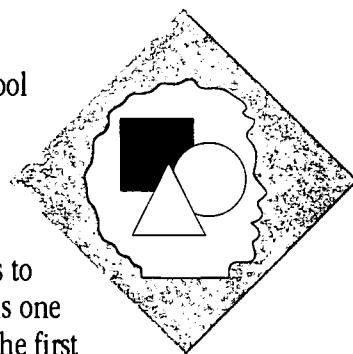
## PROJECT 2: DEVELOP A HIGH PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Systemic change requires new approaches not only in the areas of planning, curriculum development, assessment, and instruction, but also in management. The “Total Quality Management” movement offers several practices that need to be incorporated into the management of every school and district as teachers work to improve instructional and assessment practices (cf. Bonstingl, 1992; Glasser, 1990).

### QUALITY PROCESS

Quality process is at the heart of a high performance system (Hanna, 1988). A functioning high performance

management system in a school district is one in which teachers, students and support staff know that they have developed and are using a quality instructional process to get results. A quality process is one in which people “get it right the first time” or before they move on. That is, the process being used in classrooms is producing quality learning for all of the students. Teachers do not move a student on to new learning challenges until they are sure the student has mastered the prerequisite learning. When a quality process is being used, value is added, learning occurs, every day. Teachers involve and engage students in assessing whether the instructional processes being used are as effective as they should be.



### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

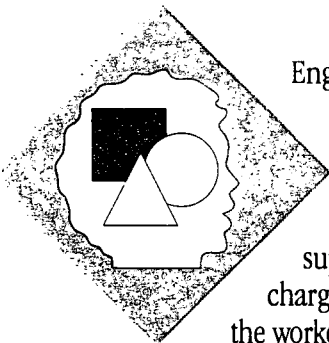
High performance management systems attend to and produce continuous improvement in the instructional process. Teachers, students and administrators systematically improve on the performance of the day before. Quality emerges as quality processes are put in place. Teachers know they are continually improving their processes and that students are continually improving in their learning and performance when they are receiving consistent real-time data on student performance.

### TEAMING

High performance management systems are characterized by cross-functional teams made up of people who are interested in the same quality result but have different responsibilities for producing it. Teachers from multiple grade levels discussing student performance and sharing observations about what has worked and what has not is an example of a cross-functional team. When teachers at one level begin to see and work with teachers at the next level as their customers, and to see the teachers from whom they are receiving their students as their suppliers, and they are all involved together in an ongoing discussion of how they are doing and how they can improve their process, then the chances of improvement in both process and result are greatly enhanced.

### COACHING

Henry Ford perfected a system in which uneducated workers could contribute to complex manufacturing processes and turn out inexpensive automobiles.



Engineering, design, business and marketing experts were centralized. Their expertise was passed piecemeal to the workers through hierarchical supervisory structures with the charge to command and control the workers. Ford organized and

orchestrated the muscle of his workers, but the process disempowered workers and created a culture in which workers and management are fundamentally at odds. In contrast, school improvement relies upon organizing and orchestrating the energy, commitment and creativity of everyone in the system. The mass production culture that conceptually separates expertise from workers has to be replaced with an empowering culture. The new culture relies heavily upon coaching where supervision has been used in the past.

Good coaches do certain things to ensure that those with whom they work consistently perform at optimum levels. Successful coaches:

- help their charges develop a program of action that will likely achieve their goals,
- create and successfully communicate a compelling vision of success,
- teach the skills essential to success to their charges so that all master the skills before they are asked to use them in "real" situations,
- make the complex simple,
- match assignments and responsibilities to the talents of their charges,
- consistently build on strengths as they also work to overcome weaknesses,
- turn less than optimum performance into learning experiences rather than failure experiences,
- learn to anticipate and teach their charges to anticipate what is going to happen next and how to respond before it happens,
- periodically call a "time out" to adjust to changing conditions and assure success, and
- model the kind of commitment and performance they expect of their charges. (Martens, 1942)

In Championship Schools, principals, teachers, support staff, parents and students all understand and assume the role of coach for those who need coaching. They are dedicated to the development of talent and schedule time to

meet in coaching conferences. They are inspired by the vision of a school in which all are well prepared for productive lives, and they are willing to "pay the price" necessary to assure that their vision becomes a reality.

### PROJECT 3: MOVE PEOPLE THROUGH THE TRANSITION TO EMPOWERMENT

People do not resist change; they resist the transition created by change (Bridges, 1991). The transition is the psychological adjustment people must go through as their roles and responsibilities change as a result of the organizational change, e.g., school improvement. Empowerment is the enhanced capability people experience as organizational conditions change and they gain the capacities needed to contribute, the control of their time needed to plan and develop new procedures, and the connections with others needed to exchange information and take effective action. Imagine a continuum one end of which represents the disempowerment people experience as the organization enters a period of restructuring. The other end represents a set of conditions in which people are optimally empowered as a result of moving through the transition successfully.

William Bridges (1991) says that people move through the transition in three stages: endings, the neutral zone, and new beginnings. During the first stage, old ways of doing things are evaluated and some are marked to be discontinued. The community then must recognize and acknowledge what is ending. But endings create real losses for people and they grieve those losses, so leaders must manage the endings before creating the new ways. If they try to invent new ways before the old are put to rest, confusion and the desire to return to the comfort of the old ways may rule the day.

The second stage, the neutral zone, is "the no-man's-land between the old reality and the new. . . a time when the old way is gone and the new doesn't feel comfortable yet" (Bridges, 1991, p. 5). The neutral zone is also a period of exploration and invention of new ways to replace those that have ended. This state is attended by stress and anxiety for some and hope and excitement by others. Leaders must learn to help everyone sort out and redefine the situation.

The third stage, new beginnings, is a time when new ways are ritually accepted and institutionalized. Leaders facilitate new beginnings first by helping people clarify the purposes and desired results of organizational change and decide what is worth doing. During this process leaders must help workers develop a picture or personal vision of what the

preferred future, the changed system, will look like. Workers must be able to imagine the new organization before they can commit to it. Finally, each individual must see his or her own part in the plan and in the reformed system, the outcome of the change.

Leaders must take four steps in managing the transition. They must:

- manage endings and losses by building relationships with opinion leaders that help them help others establish personal understandings of the transition and gain symbolic closure to and honor of the “old”;
- permit grieving to run its course and not mistake it for low morale;
- work to develop agreement on the norms and standards that govern people and behavior; and
- appoint, train and charge a transition team designed to monitor progress, identify issues, control rumors, provide support, assist with communication and just listen to people in transition.

As people move through the transition, they develop a sense of purpose, a picture of what they are trying to create, an understanding of the plan and their part in the process. As they move toward empowerment, they must build capacity to contribute, create connections with others so they can exchange information and take concerted action. Finally, they must achieve some control of the time and resources needed to do their jobs effectively.

#### **PROJECT 4: BUILD A SYSTEM OF STANDARDS AND SUPPORTING ASSESSMENTS**

Systemic change will occur only when clarity of organizational purpose exists. The planning process should clarify the school system’s purpose. This project builds on a system purpose to educate all children well. It requires that there be agreement on what is the most important learning to occur within the system and on appropriate mechanisms for assessing whether or not there is quality and equity in the learning.

This project creates clear targets for teaching and learning and establishes content and performance standards for student learning. Setting content standards requires the involvement of teachers, parents, students, administrators, board members, employers, and post secondary educators in a process to identify what they, collectively, believe students must learn—what they must know and be able to do—if

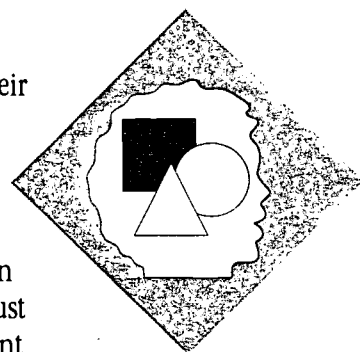
they are to be successful in their lives after schooling.

Performance standards follow the creation of content standards. They determine how well, how often and for how long students must demonstrate mastery of content knowledge and skills identified as essential (Kendall & Marzano, 1995). If students must be able to read or write well in order to be successful in life, then the performance standards set the criteria for reading or writing well enough to be successful. The performance standards can be benchmarked down through the system so that all teachers, students, and parents are continually informed about whether or not students are successfully making progress toward meeting standards as they move through the grade levels/years of schooling.

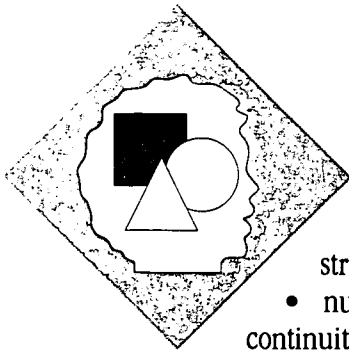
In order for content and performance standards to be meaningful, an appropriate assessment system must be designed. The assessment system must be affordable, valid and reliable and based on seven assessment principles explained by Don Burger in the article, “Designing a Sustainable Standards-Based Assessment System,” on pages 38-52. The feedback provided by a standards-based assessment system is how people will know if the system is achieving its purpose.

#### **PROJECT 5: IMPLEMENT A CHAMPIONSHIP INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS**

Once both high standards and high expectations for all learners have been established, it is essential to design an instructional system that creates a very high probability that all of the students will meet the standards. An extensive literature provides a wide variety of approaches for creating this probability. Among all of the possibilities that can be considered, there are two that should serve as the basis for organizing all other efforts. The first of these is “Learner Centered Principles,” developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education led by Barbara McCombs and published by APA and McREL (1993). The other is “Dimensions of Learning” (1992), developed by Bob Marzano of McREL and published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Working with these research-based models, it is possible to design an instructional program that is both learner and learning focused.







It is essential that the instructional program:

- challenge students to do their best and continually strive for excellence,
- nurture students and create continuity in their experience,
- be delivered through instructional and learning teams to create rich and varied experiences for both students and teachers,
- strive to attain the level of excellence that can be realized through tutorial-like instruction,
- incorporate flexible groupings of students within their teaching and learning teams to make best use of time and to provide expanded learning opportunities, and
- incorporate the development of optimistic explanatory style (Seligman, 1991) among all of the learners involved in the process.

The activities designed and implemented in this project are central to producing quality and equity in learning. They are interactive with all of the other activities in all of the other projects, however, and must be approached and implemented accordingly.

## PROJECT 6: BUILD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

No school reform effort can succeed over the long haul without community support. Most school leaders have seen substantial school improvement efforts stillborn or stalled early in the process because of lack of support among community members. The symptoms of low levels of community support are manifested in failed bond elections; school board indecision, conflict and an obsession with operations rather than strategic concerns; the constant shuffling of personnel; the distraction of leadership by demands to manage conflict at the building level; low staff morale that borders on defeat; a system-wide obsessive attention to cosmetic detail rather than matters of substance; and the retreat from improvement projects just as they start yielding results. School improvement projects live or die by public support.

As important as it is, building public support is often the most neglected and mismanaged project in school improvement. An effective approach to building support is based upon the following realities:

- Community members are the customers of our educational system; they decide if they will or will not pay for or even tolerate efforts to improve our schools.
- The school board is elected by, and often intimidated by, interested customers; so board members are especially responsive to those community members who come forward and express their opinions even when they are not in the majority.
- School people often make the mistake of believing that the one-way communication of facts and information through bulletins, newsletters and articles effectively shapes customer opinion.
- Customer opinion is colored by the fact that they are fed up, angry, overwhelmed with communication, disillusioned and scared in a world where for the first time civilization is more dangerous than nature.
- Schools are closer than other sources of frustration, so customers often work out their general frustrations on school issues.
- Being listened to is healing and customers want to be listened to. Educators can provide a structured context in which customers can communicate their feelings and form supportive opinions.
- Customers form opinions from their perceptions, not from information. Their perceptions are more deeply influenced by relationships with key opinion leaders than by facts and figures.

Each move in the school improvement process can be facilitated or blocked by community opinion. For that reason, the most effective approach to building support is first to search out and understand the opinions of community members. We recommend the use of the structured communication process in community forums and focus groups (Cordell & Waters, 1993).

At the same time school leaders must identify key opinion leaders in the community and form trust-building relationships with them. These relationships are built in the community through face to face communication. Simply talking and delivering information will not work. School leaders must learn to listen and create an ongoing dialog with leaders.

Identifying opinion leaders takes a little time but is not at all difficult. Opinion leaders are people who share a common interest in school improvement, can help or hurt the effort through their behaviors, are activists who will act on their opinions, have a following, get around to talk to a

lot of people, and have credibility. To find the key opinion leaders in your community, all you have to do is ask enough people. Some opinion leaders are role models who are living the behaviors you would like to see in everyone else. Others are technical experts to whom others defer because of their expertise. Some opinion leaders are power people who can make life easier or harder for others. Others are cheerleaders who operate from the heart and lead by charisma.

The next step is to create a communication network of key opinion leaders. The goals are to continue to build trust, learn about community opinions from them, set up communication channels to speed communication when necessary, and work with them to carefully shape the messages they are to deliver. Opinion leaders want to know first and hate to hear about anything by reading about it in the newspaper, so school leaders must create a briefing system for them.

While working with teachers and staff is seen by some as "preaching to the choir," it is critically important when building support for change. Key staff members must be trained to understand the principles of communication through relationships with key opinion leaders. They also must be trained in team building and team playing. Since relationships are built in the neighborhoods, teachers and principals carry much of the burden of relationship building and each campus should have a "community relationship" team.

While building public support through an effective communication strategy may seem complex, it is not extremely difficult. And a supportive community will reduce the overall effort required to sustain the school improvement process.

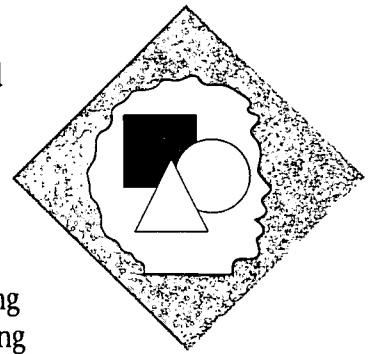
## PROJECT 7: DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY SYSTEM

Schools everywhere are confronted with the consequences of fragmenting and dysfunctional families and increasingly needy children. Schools that successfully produce championship performance in all of their children are those that bring the agencies and resources that serve their needs outside of school into the school. Integrating human services delivery systems increases the chances that problems will be solved so children can focus on learning.

The schools can never control all of the events and dilemmas that impact their children outside of school. Nor can the schools generate all of the resources that many of their children and their children's families need to successfully overcome the many obstacles they face on a regular basis. What schools can do is become the catalysts

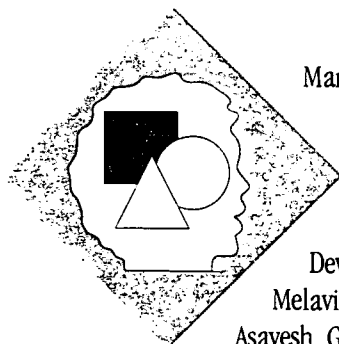
for bringing the agencies and their resources that serve children and families in need into the schools and help make access to them as easy and efficient as possible.

The practice of integrating human service delivery is being successfully implemented in urban, suburban and rural schools all over America (Melaville, Blank, with Asayesh, 1993). Through programs like *Cities in Schools* and *Communities in Schools*, the blocking needs of children are being addressed effectively. Schools are becoming the facilitators or brokers of access to services in such a way that the school becomes the one stop that families need to make to support the success of the family and the success of their children.



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# Content Standards and Benchmarks



*Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education* is the latest version of McREL's nationally-recognized study, *The Systematic Identification and Articulation of Content Standards and Benchmarks*. It responds to the ongoing national dialog about content standards and benchmarks by providing critical information for practitioners and brings order to the standards scene by:

- ✓ presenting content standards and benchmarks information in groupings for grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12;
- ✓ synthesizing the standard-setting work of national level content-area groups such as NCTM, AAAS, and others, into a single, easy-to-use reference; and
- ✓ providing content standards in a common format and language.

*This comprehensive revision updates, refines, and/or provides new information in the following areas:*

- |                 |             |                      |                                                                                |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 📎 mathematics   | 📎 geography | 📎 foreign language   | 📎 behavioral studies<br>(including anthropology,<br>sociology, and psychology) |
| 📎 science       | 📎 arts      | 📎 health             | 📎 life skills                                                                  |
| 📎 history       | 📎 civics    | 📎 physical education |                                                                                |
| 📎 language arts | 📎 economics |                      |                                                                                |

This book will be invaluable to any school district seeking to articulate a comprehensive set of standards. It will aid in decisionmaking related to curriculum and assessment. Finally, it will help educators recognize and take advantage of the possibilities for subject area integration.



Pricing and ordering information on *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education* will be available early in 1996. Find out how to get your copy by contacting us at:

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- [info@mcrel.org](mailto:info@mcrel.org)
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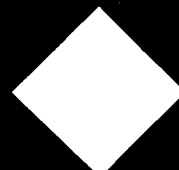
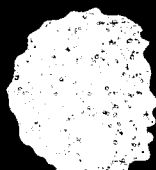
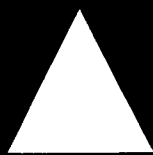
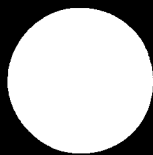


# **McREL**

**Mid-continent Regional  
Educational Laboratory**

2550 S. Parker Road  
Suite 500  
Aurora, Colorado 80014

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